

The Formation of Arab Reason

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*Text, Tradition and the Construction of Modernity
in the Arab World*

By Mohammed Abed al-Jabri

Translated by the Centre for
Arab Unity Studies

I.B.Tauris Publishers
In Association With
The Centre for Arab Unity Studies

مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية
CENTRE FOR ARAB UNITY STUDIES



مؤسسة محمد بن راشد آل مكتوم
MOHAMMED BIN RASHID
AL MAKTOUM FOUNDATION

The translation and publication of this book was made possible by the generous financial support of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation.

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Published in 2011 by I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd
6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010
www.ibtauris.com

Published in association with the Centre for Arab Unity Studies

Distributed in the United States and Canada Exclusively by
Palgrave Macmillan

Centre for Arab Unity Studies
'Beit Al-Nahda' Bldg. – Basra Street – Hamra
PO Box: 113-6001 Hamra
Beirut 2034 2407 – LEBANON
www.caus.org.lb

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Contemporary Arab Scholarship in the Social Sciences, Vol. 5

ISBN: 978 1 84885 061 3

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: available

Typeset by Ellipsis Books Limited, Glasgow
Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, UK

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Foreword

This book deals with a subject that should have been addressed a hundred years ago. The critique of reason is an essential and primary part of any initiative for renaissance. However, in the modern Arab Renaissance (*al-Nahḍah*), matters have proceeded differently; and, perhaps, this is the most important factor in its continual faltering to date. Is it possible for us to engender a renaissance with other than a renaissance mind – a reason that does not engage in a comprehensive review of its instruments, concepts, conceptions and views? If so, then this book should have been only one link in a long chain of books and research spanning a whole century. In such a situation, it would have most certainly benefited from the works preceding it. It would have been informed by them, avoided repeating their errors and indeed endeavoured to contribute to the edifice they had begun to construct, even if it may have perceived that this edifice was in need of deconstruction and rebuilding. It would have been sufficient as an aspiration to inaugurate a new discourse in a subject, that is not ‘new’, but rather a *renewed* discourse.

The reality of the situation, however, is the opposite of what it should be; and the result is that we – in this work – not only suffer from the absence of previous pioneering or other subsequent attempts but instead suffer to an even greater degree from the effects of this dearth and its reflection on the subject *itself*. During the past one-hundred years, there have been conceptions and opinions and ‘theories’ dedicated to Arab culture in its various branches, including those that have delineated particular readings of the history of this culture – Orientalist readings, *salafist* readings, nationalist or Leftist ones – oriented by previous models or

capricious and circumstantial ideological influences which led them to give attention only to what they desired to ‘discover’ or to ‘prove’. When Arab reason (*al-‘aql al-‘arabī*), in the sense which we intend here, is the reason which was formed and shaped within Arab culture, and which itself is – at the same time – that which endeavoured to produce and reproduce it, then the requisite critique – or at least as we wish it to be – demands liberation from the imprisonment of prevailing readings and considering the givens of Arab-Islamic culture in its various branches without being bound by the pervading points of view.

From this standpoint, the dual task that inspires this initiative to inaugurate work is: directing attention towards the history of Arab-Islamic culture, on the one hand, and an initial consideration of the entity of the Arab reason and its instruments, on the other. Thus, the initiative is divided into two separate yet complementary parts: one dealing with ‘the formation of Arab reason’ and the other with the analysis of the structure of Arab reason. The first is dominated by formative analysis and the second entails structural analysis.

Let us take a brief look at the first part of this book, while indicating the necessary clarifications.

This part is comprised of two sections: the first consists of preliminary approaches and resembles an introduction and initial remarks. The second is an analysis of the components of Arab culture and, moreover, the formation of Arab reason itself. It may have been necessary to begin with comparisons by means of which and through which we define our general conception of the subject: What do we mean by ‘Arab reason’? What is its relation to Arab culture? What is the nature of the ‘movement’ in this culture and how is its time delimited (i.e., its relative cultural timeframe)? Subsequently, how we should posit – chronologically – the problem of the beginning: the beginning of the formation of Arab reason and the culture to which it belonged? And to what authoritative frame of reference should it be connected? The matter pertains, then, to defining the subject and tracing the features of the view upon which we depend, along with acknowledging the content of some operative concepts employed in the research. The discussion in these matters takes up the first three chapters.

As for the second part of this book, we move the research into the components of Arab culture, the epistemological systems that underpin it and conflict within it. Our aim in this initial phase of the research is to summarise and excerpt these systems as being methods and visions and not to study them for their own sake – that which will constitute the subject of the second part of this book. In this process of ‘excerpting’,

we have charted a formative course and followed the ‘development’ of Arab culture as a whole – from the beginning we have carefully selected the branches of this culture – *nahw* (syntax), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *kalām* (theology), *balāghah* (rhetoric), Sufism and philosophy – as interconnecting and conjoined rooms of a single palace, where some lead to others through doorways and windows – and not as separate tents in remove, erected on a plain without fences or corrals, as in the case of the prevailing view. We have engaged in a foray within the passageways of Arab culture, a critical tour, directing our attention during it towards the foundations of these passageways and their supporting columns, and not towards their exhibition.

However, there was no doubt, when traversing formative horizons, about the necessity of dealing in some sort of way with the material substrate of knowledge and its hidden ideological content. Research into the ‘formation of Arab reason’ is the subject of this part of the book, and it demands attention, as we have stated, towards the history of Arab culture, towards its origins and divisions, towards its bases as well as its paths. If culture, any culture, is in its essence a political process, then Arab culture – in particular – has never been, at any time, independent or above political and social conflicts; but, rather, it was continuously the primary field in which these struggles transpired. Cultural hegemony was the first point, and at times, the single one, recorded on the schedule of works of every political or religious movement. In fact, every social force aspired to political control or desired to preserve control. It was from this standpoint that an organic relation developed between the ideological struggle and the epistemological clash in Arab culture; and, it is a relation that we could not ignore or minimise its significance or its effect, as in doing so the analysis would lose its formative dimension – that which confers upon the subject its historicity.

If we take into complete consideration that this organic relationship came about between ideology and epistemology in Arab culture in regard to formation, this obliges us to be aware at every moment of the sides of the struggle – the thing which enables us, or so we imagine, to be liberated from the ‘official’ history of Arab culture, which involves the culture supervised by the state or that rotating in its orbit and which ignores or is oblivious to the ‘counter-culture’ – the culture of opposition. And, in the best of conditions, it exhibits it – disconnected and removed – on the margins of ‘history’ – this is, at a time when one of the two cultures was delimited, at every moment, by and through its relation with the other. There was no doubt, then, about taking them into consideration together

from the perspective of action and reaction. Here we would hope that the committed, engaged reader will understand in one way or another – either consciously or unconsciously – the struggles and conflicts of the past. We have spoken here without any complexes and without preconceptions. It was not our goal and never our intention to secure victory for one side over the other – as we consider the past to belong to all, and we see that its struggles should be put behind all, neither should they remain with them nor before them.

Just as it is not possible to separate culture from politics in the experience of Arab culture – otherwise its history would have come to exhibit scattered disparate things without a spirit or a life of their own – so it would have been impossible while we were searching for the formation of Arab reason to ignore the unreasonable and irrational in order to pay attention to the rational alone. Rather, we have followed both of them together in their growth and their mutual influence; and, more than that and more importantly – in our view – we did not attempt to grasp reasonableness in any form for this or that piece of the unreasonable in Arab culture. Instead, we have respected the nature of each piece and have connected it to the structure – the primordial origin from which it branches and to which it belongs.

Finally, it must be indicated that we have consciously chosen to deal with ‘scholastic’ culture alone; we have left aside the popular culture of parables, stories, superstitions, myths and so on because our initiative is a critical one, because our subject is reason and because the issue with which we side is *rationality*. We do not, here, assume the stance of an anthropological researcher whose subject remains before him perpetually as a subject; but instead, we assume towards our subject the position of the aware, self-conscious, subjective self. Our subject is not a subject for us except to the extent that the self is a subject for itself in a process of self-criticism.

Our project is a goal, then; and, we do not practise criticism for the sake of criticism but rather for the sake of liberation from what is dead and petrified in the entity of our reason and our cultural heritage. The goal is to open the way for life so that its cycles can continue within us and so that it can re-cultivate its seeds within us . . . and perhaps it may do this soon.

Casa Blanca, February 1983
Mohammed Abed al-Jabri

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PART ONE

Arab Reason . . . In What Meaning?

Preliminary Approaches

CHAPTER 1

Reason and Culture

The term ‘Arab reason (*ʿaql*)’,¹ which we have utilized in the title of this book, will no doubt raise in the reader’s mind more than one question: is there a reason peculiar to the Arabs, different from others? Is not reason an innate characteristic of any human being, distinguishing and ‘separating’ him or her from the realm of animals? And, does the matter pertain, again, to that distinction posited by many Orientalists and European intellectuals during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries between ‘the “metaphysical” and “particularised” Semitic mentality’, and the ‘Aryan “structural” and “scientific” mentality’? Or does it relate, once more, to a new ‘secret’ of the ‘secrets’ that modern Arabs continually seek to discover in themselves, hoping to find the genius and authenticity of their origin?

Such questions could have been avoided if we had used the word ‘thought, (*fikr*)’ instead of ‘reason’. In that case, we could have spared ourselves raising such questions, which do not fall within the scope of our interests, or at least ones that we do not wish to explore in our current enquiry. However, by doing so, we might have contributed to misleading the reader regarding the real objective of this discourse. Hence, the term ‘thought’, especially when it is associated with and related to a specific people, as when saying ‘Arab thought’ or ‘French thought’ and the like, means in everyday common usage, the *substance* of this thinking and its components, and therefore the totality of all views and ideas that a specific people utilises to express its concerns and troubles as well as its moral ethics and religious beliefs and its political and social aspirations. Put differently,

‘thought’ in this sense, along with ‘ideology’, are two concepts that have the same connotation. This is precisely one of the potential sources of confusion we wish to avoid and warn against from the beginning.

Thus, what concerns us in this book are not thoughts themselves, but, rather, the generating productive instrument of these thoughts. The cause behind this overlap between thought and ideology lies in another kind of overlap produced from within the essence of ‘thought’ itself: that is, the overlap between thought as an *instrument that generates thoughts*, and thought as a totality of all those thoughts. This confusion manifests itself in several languages, including modern Arabic.² This confusion clearly illustrates that this distinction we are instigating today between thought as an *instrument* and thought as *content* is a completely artificial distinction, similar to the artificial distinction made by ancient philosophers between reason (*al-ʿaql*) and intelligibles (*maʿqūlāt*), where ‘reason’ was the *cognitive capacity* and ‘intelligibles’ were the perceived significances or meanings.

However, despite our conviction that thought is an indivisible whole, since there is no capacity to perceive in isolation from perceptible things, the distinction between thinking as instrument and thought as content is essential for us as was the distinction between reason and intelligibles necessary for the ancients. However, the difference is that, when we push this distinction further, we merely take into consideration methodology, whereas for the philosophers of the Middle Ages the vocation and concern was to distinguish between reason and intelligibles as primarily a metaphysical interest leading to question such as: is reason transcendental (*mufāriq*) or not? Do intelligible things have an independent and objective existence or are they simply terms?

The essential interrelationship between thought as an instrument and thought as content is an indisputable fact. If we take into account another indisputable fact as well, which is that thought whether as an instrument of thinking or ideas as the conceptual product itself, is always a consequence of contact with the environment with which it interacts, especially the social and cultural environment, and it is simple enough for us to recognise the importance of this environment in the formation of thought, both as instrument and content, and thus, the importance of the particular specificity of social and cultural environment in forming the specificity of thought. Consequently, Arab thought, for instance, is *Arab*, not only because of its being conceptions and views and theories that reflect the Arab reality, or which expresses it in one form or another, but because it is also a result of the method or way of thinking in which a number of

givens contributed to its formation, including the Arab reality itself and all the particular phenomena relating to it.

Let us turn a blind eye now on the issue of the relationship between language and thought and the specificity of this relationship in Arab culture – a subject of a separate chapter below – and look at thought and its products, whether expressed in one language or another, and ask if it is possible to include the writings and suppositions of Maxime Rodinson, Jack Burke and Hamilton Gibb and other non-Arab intellectuals who studied, analysed and evaluated contemporary Arab issues, or issues of ancient Arab thought? Is it possible to include the intellectual output of these Orientalists on the basis of what we term ‘Arab thought’? Contrarily, is it admissible or possible to include the views and ideas of some Arab writers dealing with European issues in the French or English languages? Is it permissible to subsume their intellectual production under so-called ‘European thought’?

In the present era there is a ‘customary’ rule that determines ‘cultural identity’ of each thinker; the rule dictates that the intellectual is not attributable to a particular culture, unless he thinks within it. Thinking within a certain culture does not mean thinking about its issues, but rather thinking by *means* of them. While it might be possible to think about issues of a particular culture by means of another culture, the thinker remains a member of the first and not the second. Al-Fārābī, for example, who thought about the issues of Greek culture, is an Arab thinker because he thought about them through and by means of the intermediary of Arab culture. Likewise, the Orientalists remain ‘Orientalists’ studying the Orient because they are located outside of that culture, that is, they are thinking about some of its issues from a position located outside one of its cultures. Moreover, they cannot be members in Arab culture because they think about its issues from outside it, that is, from outside its particular environment. Similarly, Arab intellectuals who deal with English or French issues remain Arabs as long as they remain thinking about those issues from within Arab culture and through it as a medium. Consequently, in this case, they are expressing an ‘Arab’ viewpoint about non-Arab issues.

But what does it exactly mean to think by means of a certain culture?³ Whether we consider ‘culture’ (*thaqāfah*) as comprising various sorts of material product and spiritual products and various modes of social and ethical behaviours, or whether we restrict its meaning to theoretical production alone, there are, in all cases, givens which form or express the ‘cultural specificity’ of one people or another, or one nation or another.

This particularity is due, as previously indicated, to the geographical, social and cultural environment by which a certain people or group of people is delimited. In this regard, the importance of this specificity increases, if viewed as a historical product, bearing – across time – conceptions, views and beliefs as well as methods and modes of thinking and methods of reasoning or inference that also may not be free of particularity. We do not exaggerate when we say that a large part of cultural specificity – if it is possible to subdivide specificity into component parts – is due to the particular history of this culture.

Therefore, thinking through the medium of a specific culture means thinking through the referential system formed by the essential coordinates of the defining elements and of this culture and its components, and, at the forefront of these, cultural heritage and social environment and perception of the future, and even the perception of the world, the universe and the human being, as determined by the components of that culture. Thus, if a person bears, willingly or unwillingly, his history along with him, thought also is borne along, willingly or unwillingly, and the traces of its components and the imprints of the cultural reality whereby it was formed.

We can now posit the concept of the ‘Arab reason/mind’ (*al-‘aql al-‘arabī*) that we will analyse and examine in this discourse, offering a preliminary definition: it is nothing other than this ‘thought’ (*fikr*) about which we are speaking, thought as an instrument for the production of theory, created by a particular culture that has its own specificities, in this case Arab culture itself, a common culture that carries with it the history of Arab civilisation and reflects Arabs’ reality or conveys it as well as their aspirations for the future just as it carries, reflects and expresses, at the same time, impediments to their progress and causes of their current state of underdevelopment (*takhallufihim*).

Certainly, and on the one hand, this preliminary definition of the subject of this discourse does not sweep away all the previous questions from the field, but, undoubtedly, this definition – with all its defects – moves us an important step forwards, a step that transports us from the realm of the analysis of ideology to the realm of epistemological research: research that takes as its object of study the instruments for intellectual production and *not* the products of such instruments. On the other hand, the previous observations are sufficient in our view to assure the reader that we do not mean by ‘Arab reason’ (*al-‘aql al-‘arabī*) something ‘extraordinary’, or what we sometimes refer to as the ‘genius of the Arab’, or other descriptions that cannot be enumerated here, as we do not mean by the ‘Arab reason’

something ‘without an equivalent’, where another standard of reason perhaps belongs to another ‘genius’, real or imagined. Similarly, when we describe the shift from the ideological analysis to epistemological research as a ‘step forward’, we do not introduce any consideration other than the present observations: that is, bringing the reader into the subject of this discourse. Our aim is not to make value judgements of this kind. Our sole orientation is the ‘scientific’ (*‘ilmī*) analysis of a ‘reason’ structured through the product of a particular culture, and by means of the medium of this culture itself: Arab-Islamic culture. If we put the word ‘*‘ilmī*’ in quotation marks,⁴ it is an admission, *ab initio*, that this research cannot be scientific to the same extent that scientific research found in mathematics or physics may be so. The issue here is part of us, or we are a part of it; whether we like it or not, we were integrated into it. All our hope in this research is to work through a conscious commitment to reason, and not wilful integration into dysfunctional thought for reason.

The question of whether the ‘reason’ we are about to discuss is the ‘Arab reason’ as it was yesterday – or the ‘Arab reason’ as it is ‘today’ is one which we prefer not to answer for now. In the forthcoming chapters, we shall provide necessary elements sufficient for the answer, with full awareness of the consequent results. However, let us taken another step towards a more precise definition of our subject.

Defining ‘Reason’ *Al-‘Aql*

We have removed the content of Arab thought – views, theories, doctrines and, what may be in general terms, ideology – from our area of interest, and restricted our attention and our attempt to epistemology alone. We have stated that what we intend to analyse and examine is Arab thought (*fikr*) as an instrument for theoretical production, not as such the product itself (that is, we intend here *nitāj* meaning *mantūj* – product). However, is it sufficient to replace the term ‘thought’ in the sense that we previously delimited, with the term ‘reason’ (*‘aql*) to delimit the significance of the latter and justify our attribution of it to the Arabs and the thesis of an ‘Arab reason’?

To translate the term ‘reason’ (*‘aql*) as ‘thought as an instrument for thinking’ and connecting the ‘Arabness’ of this reason (or mind) to the culture to which it belongs – Arab-Islamic culture – is undoubtedly the first step towards defining the concept of the ‘Arab reason’ as we have done here. It is a first step not because it answers the secondary

questions already raised at the outset of this chapter, but because it raises alternative questions closer to the subject and more expressive of its complexity.

Now we can enquire: whether we mean by ‘reason’ (*‘aql*) *thought* as an *instrument* and not *content*; does this imply that ‘reason’ is devoid of all content? But is thought, in this sense, merely an instrument devoid of all content? Does not the instrument – any instrument – consist definitely of a complex ‘thing’? Does not every instrument, no matter how simple, consist of a device or structure? Is it not, then, possible to distinguish in every instrument or device between the functionality of a given thing and its structure? Or does not the identity of the instrument used for ploughing the earth – the plough, for example – derive from its function, namely the function of ploughing? Thus, its capacity to plough derives from its component parts and the way in which these are structured and the manner of their usage. Does this not also correlate to the ‘instrument of thinking’, whether we term it ‘thought’ (*fikr*) or ‘reason’ (*‘aql*)?’

First, let us seek the answer to these questions, assisted by the prominent distinction of Lalande between the constituent reason or the perpetrator *la raison constituante* (*al-‘aql al-mukawwin*) and the constituted reason or the prevailing *raison constituée* (*al-‘aql al-mukawwan*); the first indicates the cognitive activity of thought (*fikr*), for while researching and studying, it formulates theories and determines concepts. In other words, it is ‘the faculty whereby every human being can extract necessary and universal principles from the awareness of relations between things’. Whereas, the second is: ‘the sum of principles and rules that we rely upon in our inferences’ and although it tends to be monolithic, it differs from one era to another, just as it may differ from one person to another. Lalande says: ‘The constituted and changing reason, if only to a certain extent, is reason as it exists in a certain epoch in time. If we refer to it in the singular (reason), it must be conceived as reason as it is in our civilisation and in our time’, and in other words it is: ‘the order of principles espoused and accepted in a certain period in history, giving it an absolute value, during that period’.⁵

If we adopt this distinction, we could say that what we mean by the ‘Arab reason’ is *constituted* reason, namely all the principles and norms provided by Arab culture to its members as a basis for the acquisition of knowledge, or, let us say, imposed upon them as a system of knowledge. Constituent reason is the characteristic that distinguishes humans from animals, that is, the ‘capacity for elocution’ (*al-qūwwah al-nāṭiqah*) in the terminology of the ancients. With this concept, we can say that a human

being shares with all persons, whoever they are, and in whatever age they may be, the fact that they are equipped with a constituent reason, distinguishing them along with whoever belongs with them to the same cultural group, by constituted reason which is an expression of the system of knowledge (understandings, conceptions, etc.) which underpins and establishes the culture to which they belong.

However, despite the importance of this distinction between the active/efficient reason (*al-ʿaql al-fāʿil*) and the prevailing reason for the subject, we should never overlook the impact and influential relationship existing between them. On one hand, prevailing reason is nothing but these principles and rules established by constituent efficient reason, as Lalande confirms himself: the sum total of principles and norms of a prevailing mindset at a given period of time is produced by efficient reason, that is, the mental activity characterising human individuals from animals, and its origin, therefore, is in the reason itself, and not outside it. On the other hand, efficient constituent reason presumes a constituted reason as stated by Lévy Strauss.⁶ This means that the mental activity – efficient – transpires from principles and according to rules, that is proceeding from a prevailing reason, that which tempts us to hypothesise that ‘Arab reason’, especially in its *active* manifestation, is a product of Arab culture. Similarly, this is the matter in the case of any other culture and the reason belonging to it, which reduces objection to [the concept of a] ‘absolute’ reason or the ‘universality’ of it. Yet, reason is universal and its principles are universal and necessary. This is true, however, only within a particular culture or within cultures of a similar pattern. As Lalande asserts, constituted reason ‘is in the category of the absolute for those who have not acquired, in the discipline of historians or the discipline of philosophers, the critical spirit’, those restrained by the prevailing reason produced by the efficient reason of their ancestors, the reason of their culture that they consider to be the only unique and viable culture, or at least their own particular world of culture.

We intended, through the previous observations, a preliminary definition of our subject: ‘Arab reason’. Before we take another step to clarify the limits we have set in the preceding paragraphs, we believe it is useful to draw attention to the limitations and recent remarks justifying the task we intend to undertake here: ‘criticism of Arab reason’, and that is from two angles. On the one hand, the ‘Arab reason’ can be viewed as a prevailing reason over the foundation of the totality of the principles and norms establishing knowledge in Arab culture. In such a situation, it is most likely to initiate an objective scientific analysis of these principles and norms

which, at the same time, are the basics of knowledge, or its systems, in Arab culture. On the other hand, 'Arab reason' may be viewed as an efficient reason producing and developing prevailing reason at a certain time in history, which implies the possibility of establishing and forming new principles and new rules to replace the old, and, therefore, the formation of a new prevailing reason, or at least a modification, development, modernisation or renewal of the former prevailing reason. It is clear that this will only be through criticism of prevailing reason, and it is also clear that criticism should be exercised within *this* reason itself, through deconstructing its foundations and provoking its efficiency, developing and enriching it with new insights and perceptions, gleaned from one aspect or another of progressive human thought, philosophical thought and scientific thought.

After this caveat, which we reiterate here for the purpose of clarifying the goal that we envisage for this study, we move forward to the next step, to the echelon of primary approaches to the subject of our study: 'the Arab reason (*aql*)'. This time, we draw on a comparison with 'Greek reason' and 'European reason', both modern and contemporary.

Reason as Cultural Product

When we discuss 'Arab reason' or 'Arab culture', we recognise, whether explicitly or not, the *a priori* existence of another 'reason' and 'culture' or 'minds' and 'cultures' which are defined in comparison with one another. This is inevitable because 'things are known by their opposites' (*bi-ḍiddihā tamyīz al-ashyā*), as our forefathers often used to assert.

We shall not go into details that might take us away from this preface, which we presumed necessary to shorten the path and openly discuss the 'opposite' or 'opposites' that we draw upon, through comparison with them, in determining the identity of 'Arab reason', despite the fact that the word 'opposite' (*ḍidd*) here does not connote conflict or disharmony, but only *difference*. When we speak of 'Arab reason' we distinguish between it, and 'Greek reason' and modern 'European reason'.

Why only Arab, Greek, and European? The answer to this question is not as difficult as some might imagine, especially given that the previous pages have traced the outline of the questions posed, their direction and tenor. With this outline, we might say that the historical givens available today compel us to recognise that only Arabs, Greeks and Europeans exercised rational theoretical thought in a form that would permit scientific,

philosophical or legal knowledge not grounded in legend and myth and liberated from ‘animism’, the conceptual view of objects of nature as living entities possessed of souls that exert an influence on the human being and his potential to learn.

It is true that the peoples of Egypt, India, China, Babylon and other great civilisations produced and applied science. However, it is also true that the overall structure of the cultures of these countries, the cradle of ancient civilisations – according to our information at present – was based on myth, to a greater or lesser extent, rather than science, as the primary operative element. The civilisations that consciously engaged in scientific thinking and that produced philosophy and science are those that used *reason*, even if we do not say in a way that was absolutely prevalent, but to an extent greater than those where magic or other forms of irrational ‘thinking’ were prevalent in the civilisations that did not produce scientific or philosophical knowledge, either rational or systematic. If we want, we could say that the determining factor in the matter of the perspective raised in our work is that all three civilisations – Greek, Arab and modern European – have, exclusively, produced not only knowledge, but also *theories* of knowledge, and they alone – as far as we know – not only engaged in thinking by means of reason but also engaged in thinking *about* reason.

‘Thinking *about* reason’ (*al-tafkīr fī al-‘aql*) reflects a supreme level of rational cognition, certainly beyond the level of ‘rational reasoning,’ (*al-tafkīr bi-l-‘aql*); thus the centre of our comparison will be restricted to cultures sharing this characteristic with Arab culture, namely Greek culture and modern European culture. Let us speculate: How should we define reason within each one of these cultures?

We will commence with Greek culture as this is, historically, the oldest. Gusdorf says: ‘the order of every culture is determined according to the conception it formulates for itself of God, the human being and the world, and the relation it establishes between these three levels of the order of reality’.⁷ So, if we want to clarify the system of Greek culture, as determined by philosophical discourse, we must refer to both Heraclitus and Anaxagoras. These philosophers have defined, each in his own way, the relationship between God, the human being and the universe in a manner reflecting, in fact, not only the order of Greek culture as described in philosophy, but also in a way that rationally restores the previous structure of the mythological perception of philosophy and esotericism, varying from one philosopher to another, in a certain way.

Heraclitus was – as historians of philosophy often mention – the first to institute the concept of ‘Logos’ or ‘universal reason’ (*al-‘aql al-kawnī*)

in order to explain the prevailing system (or order) of the cosmos, far removed from mythology and legend. This philosopher claimed the existence of a 'universal law' governing phenomena and controlling their eternal and perpetual coming into being (*ṣayrūratahā*). Human minds can attain to true knowledge of natural phenomena if they 'operate' within the absolute reason; hence, if they strive to enquire into the order of nature, they realise the characteristics of this order as essential and consistent. Heraclitus imagined that the universal reason, *la raison universelle*, inducts nature and systemises it from within, therefore, in regard to the world it resembles the relation of the soul to the human, the soul not as an autonomous 'essence' distinct, independent and distinct from the body, but as a principle of its motion, spread throughout all its parts. Consequently, this reason resembles a 'divine flame', or rather a 'divine light', that is the life of the world and its law. And the human soul derives from this 'divine flame', that is, from this universal law prevailing in nature and governing it, and so it has to recognise this law and act according to its dictates. Hence, the correct religion, in Heraclitus' view, was the harmony of the individual reason – the reason of an individual human being – with the universal law prevailing in the universe, that is, universal or absolute reason.

If Heraclitus' concept of absolute reason (*al-ʿaql al-kullī*) tends to posit a sort of oneness of existence, as universal reason is inductive and inseparable from nature, Anaxagoras differs in conceiving of 'common sense' or *Nous*, also connoting the 'absolute reason' by rendering it a transcendental principle, not integrated into or deduced from nature.

Anaxagoras finds that all bodies constitute an assembly of similar parts, susceptible, in principle, to infinite division, but assuming the existence of infinitely minute parts which cannot be divided, comparable to primary seeds (or atoms), not perceived by the senses, but conceived only by reason. The universe was, at first, a chaotic combination of these seeds, consisting of 'Chaos', namely an absolute blindness constituting the existing 'All'. And if many previous philosophers had asserted the same concept, or similar, what characterises Anaxagoras, as noted by Plato and Aristotle, is his assertion that: 'Reason [*al-ʿaql*] ordered everything, and it is the cause of all things.' In order for that primordial mixture or the absolute blindness, to emerge from its incapacity, there must be an active motive power distinguishing between the disparate parts and then connecting between them and restructuring them. Anaxagoras called this inducing power 'Nous' or reason (or soul – *al-rūḥ*). The motive power began by generating a limited orbital motion, and later expanded and still is expanding, forming by its action stars, planets and airwaves and distin-

guishing steam, hot, cold, dry land, humid, bright, dark, dense, light. The conjunction of these forms with each other originated physical bodies and then various organisms.

However, this motive principle engaging in the ‘initial impetus’ is indispensable to creation and evolution is not just a motive power, but it is a ‘Reason’ that recognises and understands this blindness and primordial mixture, as well as what entities derive from it and what order it establishes. Anaxagoras says: ‘Reason realises all things that were integrated, disconnected and divided, and reason was the one emitting order in all things that existed, exist now, and will exist, as well as this motion within which rotate the sun and the moon as well as the air and the effects that are distinct from it.’⁸

Reason governs the world. This is the expression that summarises the concept of Anaxagoras and his theory, leaving no room for coincidence, as everything has an order and necessity. And if there seems to be a mere coincidence, namely not submitting to the inevitable and necessary, it is only due to our inability to detect its cause. This is on the one hand; yet, on the other, ‘Nous’ is not just a thinking reason, thus removed from and superior to the world, but it resembles the self (or soul) – *al-nafs*: it is to the world as is the self to the body; it is rather the Self of every thing that possesses a self, or that from which the souls of all living creatures derive. However, it is not situated in nature, as it remains independent and outside of nature’s locus. It is an expression of an independent self, from which other independent selves emanate.⁹

If the conception of Heraclitus of the ‘Logos’ is that upon which the philosophy of Stoicism was founded, then it is also so for all philosophies tending towards a kind of oneness of existence (*wahdat al-wujūd*).¹⁰ Anaxagoras’ conception of the ‘Nous’ was behind Socrates’ revolution, the philosophy of Socrates on which the philosophies of both Plato and Aristotle were founded.

Whatever the dissimilitude between both Heraclitus’ and Anaxagoras’ conceptions of absolute reason, from the assertion of its situation in nature or its separateness or its independence, the essence of the Greek conception of the relationship between nature and this absolute reason (which is tantamount to God in monotheistic religions) and between it and the human being does not change. In any case, we find within the Greek culture, nature primarily as a primordial given, unordered and indistinct. Subsequently another force called ‘reason’ interferes, effecting a dissemination of order in nature, and consequently bringing about creation and evolution. As for the human being, in its essence it is a spark of fire taken

from 'absolute reason' the order of reason, and he discovers himself as a rational being, in and through nature. And the mental activity eligible for this designation is the recognition of the order and the association of things. In Greek philosophy, and generally speaking, what is applicable to one of the parts of the universe is also applicable to the entire universe, and vice versa. Thus, nature in its totality is – for Aristotle, the paramount Greek philosopher – capable of being comprehended by the reason despite its element of chaos or its ambiguous occurrences. That is because reason, in the sense of order, is its basis, and because whoever considers it through reason cannot see in it but reason. Hence, reason in the Greek Aristotelian perception is 'the realisation of causes'.

The modern philosophy of Europe pursued the same path. Malebranche says: 'The reason by which we are guided is a absolute reason . . . a perpetual and necessary reason . . . And if it is true that this reason is necessary and perpetual and unchanging then it is not different from God.'¹¹ Modern European culture held firmly, in spite of all its revolutions against the 'ancient', to the concept of the 'universal reason', conceiving of it as 'the absolute law for the human reason'. And whether this reason was considered as self-sustaining, independent from the concept of God, or whether it was considered as God himself, then the relation between it and the order of nature remained the same: it is one of conformity or, at least, harmony.

This perception was reflected even in language and particularly the European languages of Latin origins, where we encounter the word *ratio* (or its derivation, e.g., the word *raison* in French), indicating concurrently mind and reason (cause). Cournot says that the word *raison* (i.e., reason, in French) sometimes indicates the aptitude of the reasonable being, and sometimes the interrelation between objects, so that supposedly human reason (or reason itself) follows and realises the reason of things (or *objective* reason).¹²

Notwithstanding that Descartes distinguished decisively between reason and nature, attributing them to different attributes, thought (*fikir*) versus extension, and therefore corroborating an intrinsic duality of existence, he was soon compelled to attach them to knowledge, because without that, it would be inconceivable to escape doubt in establishing certainty. Descartes believed in the existence of innate ideas or concepts in the human mind, particularly mathematical principles that are at the centre of knowledge and certainty. He also claimed that the submission of nature to strict rules made its operations function as a well-conceived machine. And since he related thought and material (substance) to two entirely different essences,

he resorted to connecting the two to the divine will. Accordingly, the laws of nature are harmonised and are yet similar to the laws of reason because God made them like that. Hence, Descartes reconsiders the determination of complete harmonisation between the laws of reason and the laws of nature in an approach no different from that of the Greek philosophers, except that he interpolated divine mediation, intending to resolve the logical dilemmas posed by the duality of conception (thought) and extension.¹³

Desiring to decisively transcend those same dilemmas, Spinoza argues that Descartes' mistake resides in claiming the existence of two essences, – reason and extension while essence can only be one. And, as this sole essence is its own *raison d'être* and self-perceived – by definition – then everything else is either an attribute (such as conception and extension), or a condition/state manifesting it (such as motion and corporality). Accordingly, the essence was 'characterising nature' (*al-ṭabī'ah al-ṭābi'ah*) (namely *God* in religious terms), in the sense that God is the source of attributes and states, and God is 'the characterised nature' (*al-ṭabī'ah al-maṭbū'ah*) in the sense that He is these same attributes and conditions. Thus, reason and nature (I mean its order and laws) are two sides of one reality, but human reason is in error in its judgement because of its lack of complete awareness of the ultimate necessity that rules all things and phenomena. Where there is no coincidence and no possibility but an ultimate and holistic law, then being itself becomes 'universal reason' and inductor of nature, organiser and controlling its coming into being.¹⁴

This meditative vision of Spinoza was inconsistent with the experimental and scientific spirit prevailing in the Europe of his time, even from the time of Galileo and Bacon. Spinoza's position reinforces the principle of the inevitable on which scientific thought is based, but, on the other hand, science cannot adopt such a position because it cannot prove it. Thus, it was mandatory to re-establish modern rationalism, for which Descartes had laid the foundations, and which culminated with Spinoza, rendering it compliant with not only the scientific spirit and the requirements of experience/experiment, but also avoiding the risk of suspicion planted by Hume when he raised the problem of causality – the dilemma of reason itself. The need emerged not only to ensure compatibility between reason and the order of nature, but also to reconcile scientific truth and philosophical truth to save the integrity of both truth and the oneness of reason.

This was the task that Kant aspired to fulfil during his quest to rebuild the relationship between reason and the order of nature on the basis of

scientific hypotheses, that is, in his time, the science of mathematics and physics.

Kant reverted to a view similar to that of Descartes, segregating reason and the order of nature, to associate them through new combinations that appeared to be stronger and firmer, though not pleading their strength and legitimacy through any supreme power, outside reason and nature: and inasmuch as mathematics had already demonstrated, in his time, that it is the alphabet by which to read the book of nature – as had been invoked by Galileo before – and given that physics had demonstrated, for its part, and through a practical method, that it cannot survive, nor thrive and evolve, without mathematics; therefore, Kant suggested that the compatibility between reason and the order of nature (or certainty) must pass through this integral union between mathematics and physics.

And from this standpoint comes the question: what is the basis of this unity, or in other words, what is the basis of scientific certainty?

As noted above, Kant reverted to a similar viewpoint of Descartes and rendered reason the organiser of experience/experiment with and the ‘lawmaker’ (*al-musharri*?) for nature, yet not in what it subsumes of ‘innate principles’, as Descartes said previously, but as being itself a set of receptive patterns (the two elements of time and space, and categories) consisting of empty patterns filled with sensory intuition, which thus transform into knowledge. These intuitions remain blind without these patterns, according to Kant. And so the knowledge of certainty, and consequently the compatibility between reason and the order of nature, depends on what experience accords to reason, and what reason supplies to experience as hypothesis. Reason and experience are both proofs of each other: if reason is the ‘lawmaker’, then experience is the laboratory, and it sets the boundaries of correct knowledge. Nevertheless, if experience is bound to the inputs of our senses, consequently it will be unable to surpass the level of phenomena, or what Kant calls ‘things in themselves’, then it is inadmissible for reason to allege arriving at it and expressing its true reality.¹⁵

The conclusion that Kant deduced was not satisfactory for philosophy, although it satisfied science temporarily. Hegel fell upon Kant’s theory in distinguishing between ‘appearance’ (*al-zāhir*) and the ‘thing in itself’, among things we recognise through our senses, and things as they are in themselves, and rendered the world the production of the self and enclosed it within its boundaries. Hegel believes that a thing we rationally know is not just a phenomenon; it is also the ‘thing in itself’. In other words, it is both, and it is apt to be realised through reason, in its entirety.

Hegel embarks from an essential principle: 'every thing that is real is reasonable/rational, and every reasonable/rational thing is real'. This means that there is nothing in existence that is not suitable for explanation through reason, and every rational justification is necessarily extant because the existence of something means it is emanating from an efficient reason and a final/teleological reason, and therefore rationalising means something realising its efficient reason and its final reason.¹⁶

This is in principle, namely in terms of logic alone. Subsequently, this principle still has to be transferred from the level of logic to reality in order to effectively offer proof of the correlation of reason with the order of nature, that is, of the potential rational justification of everything in the world. At this juncture, another hypothesis is introduced as posited by Hegel, presented as a synthesis, a hypothesis assuming that the motion of the universe and its becoming is subject to an incontrovertible law leading it to the superior stations of progress, to the climax of development, to attain the absolute, namely to attain the absolute reason (or conception or God) in the world and attain the world through reason.

Kant viewed knowledge of the relation between reason and nature in a static fashion and emphasised the issue of experience; that is, the issue of phenomena as they seem static and extended, whereas Hegel viewed the same issue through a dynamic and historical perspective. Though 'the thing in itself' is not afforded by intuition, as it is not from its world, it is given by reason and history. Hereon, conformity will be consistent, not only between reason and nature, but also between reason and history, and nature itself will be merely a manifestation of the evolution of reason throughout history. Hegel propelled Western rationality to its apex: he substituted reason in the place of history, and history in the place of reason, by 'giving history meaning and reason movement', thus conformity between reason and the order of nature was no longer a matter of logic, as it was before, but it became a matter of becoming and a matter of fate, a matter of 'reality' realisable throughout history.¹⁷

With this concise outline, tracing the contours of the main framework of Kantian and Hegelian philosophy, it might seem as if the first were closer to science than the second and, consequently, closer to objective truth. This is true but only apparently so: science as it was, at the time of Kant, or rather, as Kant *apprehended* it, granted him a measure of truth over Hegel. But science as it would 'occur', namely as history would reveal directly after Kant, approves Hegel's vantage point. During the time of Kant, many things initially encompassed within the boundaries of what he called 'thing in itself' became now and for a long time after, a matter

of 'phenomena'. Kant had constrained himself to the science of his era, and from within he inspired the bounds of his theory and founded its propositions, presuppositions and assumptions. But soon science ruptured these bounds, and rebelled against these presumptions. Kant constructed the heavenly abode of his theory on the hypothesis of Newtonian physics, and considered that time and orientation are two limiting factors independent of experiment and the conditions of the experimenter. When relativism emerged, at the beginning of the twentieth century, claiming the *relativity* of time and place and their connection to the referential authority of the observer, quantum theory would also emerge with the 'Quanta' leading relativism to prevail over determinism.

With the appearance of atomic physics, the concepts of mind/reason and its principles changed dramatically. The mind used concepts and principles to organise experience/experiment (such as determinism as well as the concepts of space and time). Is the mind (reason) something other than its own concepts and instruments of operation?

It is not possible for us to present, here, an image – even a summary – of the epistemological revolution (the revolution in the theory of knowledge and, moreover, the theory of the mind/reason) which emerged from relativism and quantum theory and which effected – and still does – a total reform in the scope of knowledge. We will emphasise, however, the following, affecting our discourse in direct manner.¹⁸

Perhaps the first result imposed with the new scientific revolution beginning at the dawn of the twentieth century, was the necessity of reconsidering the concept of 'reason' itself. Formerly, philosophers considered the mind as a matter of *content* (the Aristotelian axiomatic laws of reason, the innate thoughts of Descartes, the Kantian dual factors of time and space and categorical imperatives). Whereas, in the present time, the development and progress of science have led to the formation of a new concept of the mind based on regarding the mind as nothing more than an instrument or efficacy. The reason is no longer regarded, in the view of modern science, as a set of principles, but as 'the ability to act according to principles'; it is essentially organised activity, or we might say 'playing according to the rules'.¹⁹

If so, what is the origin of these rules?

Science acknowledges only reality as the source of the reason and its rules. Undoubtedly, the rules of reason find their primary source in social life, which forms the kind of substantial realism that the human being encounters, or under the aegis of which he survives. And social life is not rectified except through rules of conduct (ethics), and the human being

does not acquire a social life – as a social animal, as Aristotle claims of course – except by conforming to these rules. Further, since social life is not one, nor is it of a single pattern, it may be expected to have several types of mental rules – or types of logic – as numerous as the multiplicity and diversity of the modes of social life. So-called ‘primitive’ peoples had their own logic, and ‘agrarian’ peoples had their own logic, and ‘mercantilist’ and ‘industrialised’ people had theirs as well, and here too, and for the same reason, every epoch of history has had its own logic.

If we aspire to overcome this particularity – the connection with social life – we must consider the reason as being the totality of rules derived from a particular subject, namely the subject with which the human is dealing. The Greeks dealt with the universe and nature as a whole, intending to interpret them and understand their phenomena; hence, they instituted the same rules they learned from their own social life, namely through their social interaction,²⁰ and they accorded life and order to it, and populated it with gods who share the kingdom of nature, just as local rulers share authority over a city or a country, even as clan elders share power in a tribal community. This is the basis of the mythological interpretation (of legends) of the universe.

When Thales of Miletus began to consider rational conception, attempting to explain nature through nature itself (*per se*), he claimed that the origin of the universe was water, so ‘Logos’ (i.e., reason) replaced ‘Mythos’ (i.e., legends and myths), and thought began to infer its substructures from nature itself, not from anything else extrinsic. That was a moment of awareness itself with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, where the latter concluded the ‘principles of reason’, thus deriving their own logic – Aristotelian logic – through the consideration of attributes observed of solid bodies such as presence and absence (the principle of identity), and interdependence/correlation and contiguity/proximity (the principle of causality), and so on. Hence, Aristotelian logic, as Konitz claims, is an expression of a physics adopting the solid body as its subject. From this derives its response to the requirements of classical physics which also took as its subject the solid body. And when modern physics crossed the barrier of this ‘Solid Body’ and entered the atomic world, this changed dramatically. Aristotelian logic was unable to depict the qualities and characteristics of atomic particles, and the atomic world imposes new rules on human reason – the scientific mind, namely a new logic. There emerged a new kind of presence and absence (the matter of a dual nature, in bodies and in waves, of the atomic entity), and a new type of correlation (the principle of uncertainty posited by Heisenberg); time and space have merged, and location

and velocity (of the atom) are interpolated . . . and so forth, new facts imposed new approaches, namely a new *reason*.

Thus, we reach the following conclusion: reason is, in the final analysis, a set of rules deriving from a certain subject. As for logic, it too will consist of – for Konitz – a ‘physics of a certain subject’, hence it is fundamental to recognise multiple types of logic according to the multiplicity of systems of rules that establish scientific activity in this field or that.

That is the axiomatic trend, hypothesis-synthesis, which is now sweeping ‘neo’-science, the inception of which began with mathematics in the mid-nineteenth century. Scientific endeavour had become founded on establishing new ‘systems of rules’ for the working of the mind, amenable to adaptation with the experimental processes. These systems of rules proceed in turn to create a new reason, from which habit and practice will make a ‘natural and necessary’ reason, just as Aristotelian logic seemed necessary and natural. The constituting mind/reason and the constituted mind/reason, in the words of Lalande, operate through their dialectical relation, to make the mind realise its reality by and throughout its becoming. And if we wish to be more precise – according to the modern scientific conception of the reality of the mind – we would concur with Jean Ullmo: the rules according to which the mind operates are not the ones that determine it or make it known, but its ability to derive an infinite number of rules, which is what it actually is. Accordingly, rationalism becomes not just the conviction in the consistency of the principles of reason with the rules of nature, but the conviction that mental activity can construct orders expanding to encompass different phenomena. And since experience alone is able to decide in the matter of consistency which has come to mean empirical verification, contemporary rationalism is empirical rationalism and not a contemplative rationalism as it was before.²¹

Hitherto, what can we derive from this summary we have presented about the development of reason and the means of thinking in it within Greek culture and modern European culture: philosophically and scientifically?

First, let us emphasise that this presentation, in which we followed the discourse of Greco–European reason, justifies the assertion of ‘Arab reason’. This discourse led us to entertain the idea of the multiplicity of ‘reason’ and ‘logic’, since these constitute, in the final analysis, a set of rules derived from a certain subject. Therefore, every time a subject characterised by an obvious particularity is exhibited, it is possible to posit the existence of a reason or a logic particular to it. And we believe – as we will demonstrate

subsequently – that Arab culture, and more precisely, the subject with which the efficient mentality of Islamic thinkers dealt, is a subject with distinguishing particulars different from the particulars of the subject with which the efficient mentality of Greek thinkers and European philosophers dealt. Thus, the rules that intellectual efficiency extracted, operating from within Arab-Islamic culture, will be distinct from the rules establishing the centre of the Greek reason or the European reason. Therefore, when we employ the expression ‘Arab reason’, we utilise it from a scientific perspective, adopting a modern scientific perspective of the mind, and not any other perspective, similar to the one inhering in the concept of ‘mental’ (*al-‘aqliyah*), which means an innate and natural state of mind, solemn, ruling individual and communal perception, similar to how the biological and inherited (traditional) factors rule behaviour and conduct. We are herein far from this perception which is not founded on any scientific basis. But we strive for commitment to scientific perception in its finest extent, not subjecting this perception, even at its apex, to the ultimate (absolute) truth. Thus the ultimate (absolute) truth in this scope, as in others, is not presumed, yet it is the ‘premise’ that goes away every time we get close to it.

This is on one hand, and on the other hand, is the outline we presented of the concept of reason in Greek and modern European cultures, verifying the historical context of this mind, namely its connection with the culture in which it operates, that which negates the absolute character of that mind. As we noted in a previous section, ‘absolute reason’ is ‘absolute’ only *within the culture that produced it*. Moreover, the evolution of the concept of reason in Greco-Roman culture reflects the evolution of this reason itself, and its renewed self-conception.

Another conclusion we intended to be drawn from this presentation on the reason and the way of thinking in it as well as its type of conception in what we have illustrated of the mind and its mode of thinking and the type of perception in Greek and modern European culture is that this presentation offers us – despite all its deficiencies – a possibility of comparison with the ‘Arab reason’, in the purpose affords of identifying the latter more precisely.

Then how is ‘Arab reason’ distinct?

It might seem that we are now in a position to engage directly in a comparison, but this is only an illusion; thus even if we are aware of the evolution of a concept of the mind/reason in Greco-Roman culture, we have yet to extract what can be considered to be a fixed internal entity, from the history of this reason, where we mean by that its substantial

structure which has remained constant despite all the transformations to which this mind was subject, as it is only on the basis of this substantial structure that comparison can be made. This is on one hand, and on the other hand, we have still not recognised, until now, the conception of the mind and its mode of thinking and iperception in Arab culture, in order to make an appropriate comparison between two known quantities, and not between a known and an unknown.

Let us first attempt to surmise what might be considered constants of Greco-Roman reason in light of the illustration above.

Notwithstanding the tremendous development that Western reason has known since Heraclitus until today, there are two constants shaping the course of that evolution, and, moreover, determining the structure of mind/reason in the Greco-Roman culture. These two constants are:

1. The consideration of the relation between the mind/reason and nature as a direct relation, on the one hand;
2. Faith in the capacity of the mind/reason to interpret and disclose the secrets of this relation, on the other.

The first constant establishes a concept in existence, and the second constant establishes a concept in knowledge, and this is the only reason why we distinguished between them, whereas in reality they both constitute together a single structural constant, founded on the central relations in the structure of the reason about which we are talking, concerning an axis and one of the two poles: the reason and nature.

Obviously, the reader must have noticed the absence of a god, or any other supernatural power as a third element. The reality is whether we examine the structure of the mythological thought of Greeks before philosophy, or the structure of the mind/reason established by Greek philosophy, or we analyse the structure of Latin Christian thought or modern and contemporary European thought, we will find that the godhead does *not* constitute a third element within them, independent itself of nature and the human being. Gods in Greek mythology do not appear until after the differentiation of the universal void into planets, stars, land and sky, and so on, and they are perceived within this mythology as human or anthropomorphic. Whereas in philosophy, as we have discerned before, in Heraclitus and Anaxagoras, the concept of the god is related to an order of the nature which they posited in 'universal reason' (the *logos* for Heraclitus and the *Nous* for Anaxagoras), and whether this God-Mind was appended

to nature or separate from it, it is in both cases an *order*, a systemising power intervening to establish order and distinguish something in existence, it is Nature in the state of initial void, the state of chaos and indeterminateness. Hence, Nature in its primordial condition exists independently of this organising power: the mind or God. As for the ideal of the Good (Plato's God), it is at the apex of the pyramid which constitutes the ideal rationality and it is itself of this kind, it is the apex of the reason. As for Nature in its primordial state, it does not persist on this basis, indeed, it exists independently, and is of a different nature, therefore. Plato presumed the existence of another god and that is God the Creator, while the god of Aristotle, 'the Prime Mover', seems to be mere 'scientific' supposition posed to interpret the principle of motion; in this regard it is merely a 'demand' of logic more than anything else. Even the metaphysical depiction sketched for us in some of Aristotle's writings, transforms it into a self-absorbed mind/reason turning away from everything else except itself, ignorant of everything other than its own essence: it is the mind/reason itself (*al-ʿaql*), and the active rational perceiving intelligence (*al-ʿāqil*) and the intelligible (*al-maʿqūl*). However, in Christian theology, the incarnation of God in the Messiah renders both a single entity *vis-à-vis* Nature, the second party. In this system, God and the human being persist at one pole and Nature at the opposing pole. Finally, modern European philosophy rendered God either a force integrated into nature – it is the manifestation of organisation in it (as for Spinoza and Hegel), or a power separated from nature – it is considered to be the cause of consistency between the principles of the mind/reason and the laws of Nature. In modern and contemporary science, by contrast, the concept of God is completely rejected, but not necessarily as a lack of acknowledgement of its existence.

This is in regard to existence, or on the ontological level. As regards knowledge, or the epistemological level, faith in the ability of the mind to interpret nature implies complete confidence in it. It is on this belief that Aristotelian logic was based, which describes itself as the set of rules that renders the human being, if he complies with them, impervious to error; and this same belief established and still continues to underpin modern and contemporary science. Did not Galileo state that the 'book of nature' is legible through the alphabet of mathematics, which is purely a mental substructure? Did not Descartes establish his philosophy on the concept of axiomatic rationality? Does not contemporary science depend, whether in dealing with the atomic world or that of outer space, on axiomatic forms – namely the mental substructures established by the human reason commencing from premises that it has posited, without taking into consideration anything else

during the process of structuring other than excessive vigilance to avoid contradiction with itself, along with its suppositions and what necessarily follows from these as conclusions?

Before and after this, did not Heraclitus and Anaxagoras and all those who came after them among Greek and modern European philosophers, correlate reason and the order of nature? Does not modern science understand reason as being a set of rules derived from a certain subject, which implies inclusively the correspondence between it and the rules of the subject? And last but not least, do not Greek philosophy, modern European philosophy and contemporary science admit the fact that the reason discovers itself in nature which is, itself, 'reason', in the sense of a system or laws?

The correlation between reason and the order of nature and assuming that the mind discovers itself in nature through interacting with it are two basic constants in Western Greco-European-thought. Let us consider the situation in regard to 'Arab reason'.

If we wish to embark on the discussion on 'Arab mind/reason' from the point where we concluded our previous discussion of the Greco-European mind/reason, we will have to discern first what distinguishes 'Arab reason' as part of Arab-Islamic culture, that the relations within it are arranged in axes about three poles: God (Allāh), the human being and nature. And if we want to restruct this relation to a bipolar one only, as we did in regard to the Greco-European mind, then we must posit God at one pole, and the human being at the other. As for nature in this regard, we must note its relative absence, almost to the same degree to which we registered the absence of God in the structure of the Greco-European reason, as presented earlier. Not only this, but it might also be said that the role that the concept of God plays in Greco-European thought, is that tantamount to the role it plays in the Arab mind, the role of an intermediary or a conduit: in Greco-European thought the concept of God is used to justify the correspondence between the laws of reason and the laws of nature, and moreover for the purpose of conferring credibility on rational knowledge, namely rendering it a certainty. In other words, the concept of God here plays the role of 'assistant' to the human reason in uncovering the natural order and divulging its secrets. As for 'Arab reason' as it was formed from within Arab-Islamic culture, nature plays the role of the 'assistant' to the human reason, to discover God and clarify his reality. From this standpoint in Arab-Islamic culture, it is required that reason contemplate nature in order to arrive at its creator: God. In Greco-European culture, reason uses God as a means to comprehend nature, or at least to

guarantee the correctness of its comprehension of it; that is, if reason does not dispose of God entirely, or unify God and Nature.

We can proceed with this kind of comparison between the metaphysical framework of Greco-European reason and the metaphysical framework of 'Arab reason', positing the conclusions first and then attempting to demonstrate or justify them, and if we do so, we will shorten our path. This, however, would necessarily be at the expense of knowledge of the way, that is at the expense of our subject itself. Our goal is not the comparison itself, nor to corroborate a kind of hypothesis or 'synthesis'. No, what we are aiming for is to understand 'Arab reason' through this journey through the 'conduit' of the culture that produced it, and which itself is factored in producing and developing; thus the identification of something from within is much preferable to endeavouring to describe it from without, especially when the researcher departs from a point of critical analysis. It must be emphasised here again that what interests us fundamentally is not reason as a metaphysical structure but the mind as an instrument for theoretical production, as a 'system of rules', the rules of mental activity. Thus how is it possible to apprehend this system-instrument if we do not track it in its operation and throughout its processes of operation and production?

Let us start from the beginning, and remain within the scope of the initial constraints mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Reason and Language

If the concept of reason/mind in Greek culture and modern and contemporary European culture is connected to 'awareness of causes', namely to knowledge, as we previously demonstrated, the significance of the term 'reason – *al-'aql*' in the Arabic language, and consequently in Arab thought, is related mainly to conduct and ethics. We find diverse and clear indications given by Arabic dictionaries accorded to the root (*ʿ-a-q-l*) where the connection between these indications and ethical behaviour is almost stereotypically pervasive and obligatory.

It is true that the concept of 'mind/reason' in Greco-European culture has extended to the fields of ethics, and in a special manner since the Stoics who saw wisdom, all wisdom, as living according to Nature, namely according to the 'Logos' or 'universal reason', and from this standpoint the Stoics inaugurated the decisive discourse on 'ethics of the reason', ethics founded on the concept of duty. And we can confirm, from here forward,

that the concept of 'reason' in the Arab mind will also extend to the field of knowledge. However, there is a major difference between an orientation proceeding from *knowledge* to ethics and an orientation proceeding from *ethics* to knowledge. In the first case, which is that of Greco-European thought, ethics are based on knowledge, whereas in the second case, the case of the Arab thought, knowledge is based on ethics. Knowledge here, in the case of the Arab thought, is not a revelatory disclosure of the relations correlating natural phenomena with each other, it is not a process through which the mind discovers itself in nature, but rather it is the distinguishing between the subjects of knowledge (whether sensory or social) between the good and the despicable, virtue and evil. And the task of reason and its function, even the very hallmark of its existence, is to convey its bearer to good conduct and prevent him from committing evil.

We find this ethical dimension, valuable as it is, not only in words which are derived from the root (*'a-q-l*) but also in every word related to it through some sort of affiliation such as mind (*dhihn*), intelligence/understanding (*nuhan*), intellect (*hijā*), thought (*fikr*), heart/faculties (*fu'ād*) . . .

Some examples follow.

It has been said in *Lisān al-ʿArab* (*The Arab Tongue*, the greatest lexicon of Arabic): 'The mind/reason – *al-ʿaql*: circumspection and prevention versus idiocy; and the rational person (*al-ʿāqil*) is the one who conforms to its dictates and view: taken from a hobble (fetter) with which one binds the legs of animals', and also: 'the rational is the one who restrains his self and prevents it from its pleasure – taken from their saying that the tongue is rational when confined and prevented from speech . . . and the mind is called the mind because it reasons its possessor away from becoming involved in the perils that will destroy it, thus arresting/confining it'. Also according to *Lisān al-ʿArab*: 'Reason or intelligence in the sense of *nuhan* prevents/forbids (*tanhīʿan*) the despicable', whereas the intellect (*hijā*) is 'the discernment of errors and fallacies'. It is clear here that this issue is related, even with the meaning discernment (*tafaṭṭun*) (or insight), to the ethical dimension and not only to the aspect of knowledge (i.e., fallacies and not causes) and although the word 'mind' (*dhihn*) basically connotes comprehension, nevertheless this 'comprehension' relates to value judgments as well, as in *Lisān al-ʿArab*: 'it is said that he minded such and such in the sense of he distracted me from it'. . . And the term *dhihn* in the sense of mind is also: a force/power, whereas the 'heart' (*fu'ād*) – derived from *taffaʿūd* – is 'perspicacity', namely sagacity. The writer of *Lisān al-ʿArab* adduces a prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) describing the faculties of the heart as tender and the heart as forbearing, suggesting that it has a

conscientious interior, just like the heart. *Lisān al-‘Arab* adds: ‘perspicacity: one who is afflicted in his heart with pain’, confirming the emotional significance we have emphasised. Although the word ‘thought’ (*fikr*), despite the fact that it indicates essentially ‘to induce/actuate thought in something’, confers upon this ‘idea’ a signification of value, as it was reported in *Lisān al-‘Arab*: ‘it is said that I do not have an idea of something, that is, I do not have *need* of it’.

However, if we consult the Qur’ān, we will find this value-signifying meaning related to the word ‘the reason – *al-‘aql*’ and alike, mostly reflecting the distinction between good and evil, between guidance and deviation. Perhaps what is significant in this regard is that the Qur’ān does not utilise the root *‘a-q-l* in noun form. The utterance ‘reason – *‘aql*’ is never mentioned in the Qur’ān, but rather it is mentioned in verbal form in most cases. The Qur’ān chastises the unbelievers as they do not distinguish between right and wrong – in the moral sense: ‘They have hearts wherewith they do not understand, eyes whereby they do not see, and ears through which they hear not. They are like cattle, rather they are even more misguided as they are oblivious’ (*al-a‘rāf* Q 7:179). Thus the heart and the reason here are one and the same, and the Qur’ān elucidates the phrase: ‘they understand not’ (*lā yafqahūna bih*): ‘For the worst of creatures [lit., ‘steppers’ or things that walk on legs] for Allāh are the deaf and dumb, those who will not reason [i.e., resort to the use of the *‘aql*: *lā ya‘qilūn*].’ (*al-anfāl* Q 7:22). Also: ‘And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; for sight, hearing and the faculties [of feeling] (*al-fu‘ād*) will be asked about [on the Day of Judgement]’ (*al-isrā* Q 17:36). It is clear that hearing, seeing, feeling and speaking are all words discerned here at one level or in a single sense, hence they are all ‘instruments’ whereby to distinguish between good and evil, and therefore they all subject to the demands of *responsibility*. There are many other verses correlating between the reason, guidance and responsibility/culpability such as the following verse: ‘When it is said to them: “Follow what Allāh has sent down” they say: “Nay! We shall follow the ways of our fathers.” What? Even if their fathers did not use their reason and were not guided? The similitude of those who reject faith is the like of one who shouts at one far away, where the shouts and calls go unheard: deaf, dumb, and blind as they do not reason’ (*al-baqarah* Q 2:170–171).

It is true that we can apprehend through the various significations of the word ‘reason’ and other words a sense of what could be related to order and systemisation, but even in this case, the aspect of value or valuation is omnipresent. Thus, order and systemisation in the deliberative

speech of the aforementioned Arabic words is always bound to human conduct and *not* to nature and its phenomena. Heretofore, it can be presumed that 'reason' in the conception transmitted by the Arabic lexicons is always related to the self and its states of conscience as well as to its value judgement. It is, concurrently, both a mind and heart, thought and conscience, scrutiny and a lesson; however, in the conception transmitted by European languages, the mind is always topical and related to its subject; it is either an order of existence, or a realisation of this order, or the power of awareness.

The previous givens lead us, at least in principle, to a position enabling us to assert that 'Arab reason' is governed by the normative evaluative perception of things. What we mean by the normative evaluative perception is this orientation of the thinking, to tend to seek a place for things, and their position in the order of ethical values which is considered a referential criterion and basis for this thinking. This is in opposition to objective perception which seeks to analyse things on the basis of their essential components and attempts to disclose what is essential in them. The normative evaluative perception is reductionist, constraining a thing to its value, and thus to the meaning deduced by the person (or society or culture) – the possessor of this mode of perception, whereas objective perception is an analytical and structural perception: it deconstructs a thing into its essential elements to restructure it in a form emphasising its essence.

Perhaps the same has been emphasised by ancient critics such as al-Jāhīz and al-Shahristānī, who considered the comparison between Arabs and non-Arabs in the field of thought and culture.

In his famous text, al-Jāhīz says:

Except that every discourse and every meaning for the Persians/non-Arabs indeed comes out of lengthy thought and out of *ijtihād* [concerted independent reasoning] and consultation and cooperation and through protracted contemplation and studying books and the accounts of the initial knowledge over the secondary and the addition of a third to the knowledge of the second until the fruits of those thoughts are gathered by the last of them. [We notice here that this is only possible if the orientation of the thinking is *objective*.] Everything for Arabs is indeed innate sense and spontaneous as if inspiration, and there is neither suffering nor endeavour, neither contemplation nor seeking assistance: indeed, he directs his whim to theology and to the ignominy of the day of dispute, or when he leans over the top of the well, or spurs a camel or upon quarrel or with a conveyance or upon a struggle or at war, he does nothing but direct his whim to the entire *madhab* or to the pillar which he

intends; thus the meanings come diffuse and the utterances as a swarm – not fettering himself nor can any of his descendants plot against him. And they are not like the one who preserves the knowledge of other than himself and follows the words of those who came before him, so they do not memorise other than what is attached to their hearts and coalesced, ensconced in their breasts and connected to their minds [*‘uqūlibhim*], with no culpable effort and no intention and no reservation and no demand.²²

Al-Jāhīz, who conveyed these observations as part of his praise of Arabs and repelling attacks of popular chauvinist movements, was perhaps unaware that he was inadvertently stripping them of the ability of ‘reasoning’ in the sense of inference and rational judgement. The ‘Arab reason’, for al-Jāhīz, is underpinned by intuitiveness and improvisation; he meant by this rapidity of ‘apprehension’ and the lack of hesitation in promulgating judgments. This implies the control of the normative evaluative perception caused by instantaneous reactions, as opposed to objective perception which is based on ‘toil and endurance and [contemplation by] letting the eyes wander/taking a look around’, which is one of the characteristics of the ‘reason’ of non-Arabs, whether Persian or Greek.

Al-Shahristānī takes – once the conflict with the popular chauvenist movements had abated – a ‘neutral’ position, the position of historicising thought from a philosophical perspective, genuinely depending on comparison, but with an analytical and in-depth perception. Al-Shahristānī says that Arabs – and Indians – are more inclined to ‘deciding the particulars of things and judging according to essential identities/quiddity of things and realities and utilising spiritual matters’, whereas for non-Arabs (Romans and Persians), ‘they are most inclined to deciding upon dispositions/natures of things and judging according to means and qunata and resorting to the use of physical matters’.²³ Al-Shahristānī confirms the same verdict in another part of the same book, where he posits ‘innate sense’ (*al-fiṭrah*) and ‘intuition’ (*al-ṭabʿ*) as ‘spiritual matters’, and ‘acquisition’ (*al-iktisāb*) and ‘exerted effort’ (*al-juhūd*) as ‘physical matters’.²⁴

Al-Shahristānī proposes a comparison based on contradistinction: on the determination of the particular attributes of things in opposition to determination of their dispositions/natures: meaning dealing with things through their attributes and distinctive characteristics rather than other and not through their natures; that is, through their inner constitution, their substructure and the order of inner relations. Here, we must recall that the idiom ‘dispositions/natures’ in ancient terminology simultaneously implies the constant system of causality system (a type of necessity), and

the quintessential structure of a thing. And by way of example ‘judgment according to quiddities and realities’ means assessing something through the most important qualities for whomever is engaging in its evaluation, the thing for which a look around is sufficient, based on ‘innate sense and improvisation’, and such a judgment is naturally a value judgment. Completely contrary to that is ‘judgment through the constraints of means and quanta and the use of physical things’ (namely senses and experiment), which are related, for al-Shahristānī, to ‘acquisition and endeavour’ in contradistinction to ‘innate sense and improvisation’. If we return to the epistemological field, from within which al-Shahristānī is speaking, we will recognise that ‘judgement through the constraints of means and quanta’ connotes clarifying components of a thing structure, namely viewing it objectively. In addition, this objective perception is different from self-reflexive perception in that it relies on deductions and demonstration/proof (*burhān*), and not intuition and conscience.

We can expand on determining the ‘normative evaluative tendency’ that governs and orients the ‘Arab reason’, as well as Arab conception of the mind, through citing other texts of ancient and modern writers, Arab and non-Arab. However, our goal is not the collection of documents to subject ‘Arab reason’ to a particular verdict or another, and hence fall into the same ‘normative evaluative tendency’. Our task, rather, is to analyse the epistemological basis of Arab culture which produced ‘Arab reason’. The comparison between Arabs and non-Arabs in the realm of thought, whether through the technique of al-Jāhīz or that of al-Shahristānī, does not interest us except in what it offers to us as of initial delimitations of the concept of ‘Arab reason’; otherwise, it is not yet time for us to delve into such.

Nevertheless, another methodological factor imposes upon us consideration of the point at hand, in order to preclude us from making general/stereotypical judgements before justifying and substantiating them: we have embarked on an endeavour to perceive some of the elements which form or contribute to the formation of the particular characteristics of ‘Arab reason’ of the language preserved for us by the lexicons, the language of the Arabs of the Jāhiliyah, and we clarified that through bringing forth the content of some verses of the Qurʾān, which is an Arabic book verbalised in the Arabic language of the Arabs of the Jāhiliyah, as it was during the era of the Prophet. And when al-Jāhīz and al-Shahristānī spoke of the ‘Arab reason’ they were indicating essentially the ‘reason’ of the Arabs of the Jāhiliyah. Thus, we have not emerged from the ‘Era of the Jāhiliyah,’ in all that this era connotes of environmental elements:

geographic, economic, social and cultural. Thus, is it feasible for us to generalise the particular characteristics of ‘Arab reason’ during the era of the Jāhiliyah for subsequent Islamic epochs?

It is the same question that we posited at the beginning of this chapter, and for which we find ourselves, once again, compelled to postpone the answer until we complete the related elements, despite our previous clarifications – indeed, *because* of them. Perhaps the next chapter will enable us to reiterate the same question in a different fashion, in broader and deeper form.

Notes

1. The Arabic term *al-‘aql*, deriving from the triliteral root ‘a-q-l, can be translated into English variously and among common translations are: ‘reason’, ‘mind’, ‘understanding’, ‘comprehension’, ‘intelligence’, ‘rationality’, ‘intellect’ and ‘rational intellect’. The translation here as ‘reason’ was based upon consultation with the author himself and his express preference as the result of an issue over a working title tentatively chosen for this book (*Takwīn al-‘Aql al-‘Arabī*) of ‘Formation of Arab Reason’. In that discussion, al-Jabri referred to Emanuel Kant’s usage of the term ‘reason’ (die Vernunft) and indicated that this was the intended connotation of the Arabic term (*al-‘aql*). Moreover, al-Jabri draws on Lalande’s distinction between the ‘constituent reason’ or the perpetrator *la raison constituante* (*al-‘aql al-mukawwin*) and ‘constituted reason’ or the prevailing *la raison constituée* (*al-‘aql al-mukawwan*). It may, however, also be noted that al-Jabri was francophone and not a speaker of English, which might have, arguably, influenced his predilection for the term ‘reason’ as opposed to ‘mind’ where the typical French rendering would be either ‘la raison’ or ‘l’esprit’. On the other hand, possible direct support for use of the term ‘mind’ over the term ‘reason’ in the English translation of this work – at least in certain instances – can be drawn from al-Jabri’s book itself where he refers, for example, on pages 39–40 of the Arabic original (Mohammed Abed al-Jabri. *Takwīn al-‘Aql al-‘Arabī*. ninth edition. Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2006) to Sigmund Freud’s theory of the relation of *al-‘aql* – that is ‘mind’ to the ‘unconscious’ – *lāsh‘ūrīyah*. In German, ‘mind’ can be rendered as ‘der Verstand’ or potentially as ‘die Vernunft’, following Kant, where the former term tends to have the connotation of a ‘mental faculty’ and the latter that of ‘common sense’, but where ‘vernünftig’ (the verbal form of the latter) connotes ‘logisch denken’ or ‘thinking logically’ and the ‘capacity to reason’. This said, the standard rendering of Freud’s work in terms of English would, of course, entail reference to the ‘unconscious *mind*’ as opposed to ‘reason’. Lastly, it may also be noted that Ibrahim Abu Rabi‘ in his book *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (New York: SUNY Press, 1995) translates the title of this book as ‘Formation of the Arab Mind’ (p. 28) and treats the subject matter similarly. Due to the complexity of this issue, the Arabic term *‘aql* has been retained parenthetically to alert the reader to the fact that both where the term ‘reason’ has been used – in keeping with the author’s express preference – and in instances where a translation of ‘mind’ was deemed warranted or preferential, that the author has only used only one and the same term throughout. (Editor’s note)

2. When we say ‘contemporary Arabic’ (Modern Standard Arabic), we refer to the language which we use to read and write today, and that which is being enriched constantly from translation. Lexical Arabic language does not possess such an interaction; for instance, the expression ‘*fikr* (thought)’ in archaic Arabic used to denote the act of thinking rather than the content of thought, which the ancients referred to as *ārāʾ* (opinions), *madhāhib* (schools), *aqāwīl* (categories).

3. Al-Jabri uses the phrase *bi-wāsiṭah* which has been rendered here generally as ‘by means of’ or ‘through the means of’; however, it should be pointed out that the term expresses the connotation of an intermediary, and thus, the meaning which is being expressed is that of thinkers ‘thinking by means of the interposed medium of culture’. (Editor’s note)

4. Since we are about to address some preliminary definitions, it is relevant here to explain some of the considerations that commended our putting some expressions and phrases between single quotation marks.

In typographical conventions, quotation marks are commonly used in modern times to indicate that the word or sentence has been quoted literally from another writer or author. In addition, parentheses might be used to express reservations over the parenthesised expression or to warn that its usage carries altered content. Also, they might be used to signify that the parenthetical expression may possess a special meaning in certain contexts. Apparently, the lack of typographical diversity in Arabic punctuation – contrary to foreign languages – is the reason behind our extensive reliance on this punctuation mark and in the sense we discussed above.

5. A. Lalande, *La Raison et les Normes* (Paris: Hachette, 1963), pp. 16–17, 187, 228.

6. Claude, Levi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962), p. 349.

7. Gusdorf, Georges, *Les Origines des Sciences Humaines* (Paris: Payot, 1967), p. 130.

8. *The Dawn of Greek Philosophy, the Texts of Greek pre-Socratic Philosophers*, trans. Aḥmad Fuʾād al-Ahwānī Shadhrah, 1st edn. (Cairo: 1954).

9. Léon, Robin, *La Pensée Grecque et les Origines de l’Esprit Scientifique*. Ed. Albin Michel (Paris: 1963), p. 152.

10. In this section, al-Jabri has used two terms which may connote ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ – *al-rūḥ* and *al-nafs* – where the term ‘wind’ (*rīḥ*) is derivative of the root of the first and ‘breath’ (*naḥās*) is derivative of the root of the second. Both terms are Qurʾānic, and there was considerable debate among ancient Muslim theologians of the *kalām* as to whether or not the two terms were cognate or whether they referred to two different, discrete entities. The term *naḥās* is often rendered as ‘self’; however, as can be seen in the previous section, this may be more properly rendered as ‘Self’ when used in the universal sense, and especially in the ‘syncretic’ philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 1240) who was the chief exponent of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* – ‘oneness of being’ – with its strong parallels to the Vedas. (Editor’s note)

11. Nicolas, Malebranche, *Recherche de la Vérité*, in œuvres complètes. 7 vols (Paris: Vrin, 1958).

12. Antoine Augustin, Cournot, *Essai sur les fondements de nos connaissances* (Paris: Hachette, 1922), p. 16.

13. See Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, Meditation IV, also see his letter to Mersenne in: Descartes, *Lettres*, Texts Choisis (Paris: PUF, 1964), p. 11.

14. See for example Karam, Yūsuf. *Tarīkh al-Falsafah al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿarif, 1957), p. 105 till the end.

15. In addition to the original reference: *Naqd al-ʿAql al-Khāṣṣ*, by Kant, for Arabic

references, see: Zaydān, Maḥmūd. *Kant wa-Falsafatah al-Nazariyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif [n.d.], and Ibrāhīm, Zakariyah. *Kant wa-Falsafatah al-Naqdīyah* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, [n.d.]).

16. Scientific development truly confirms that ‘every thing that is real is reasonable/rational’ (*kul mā huwa ‘ilmī fa-huwa ‘aqlī*) where small and large natural phenomena are accordingly set to the scientific field and scientific explanation. As for his contrasting expression ‘every reasonable/rational thing is real’ (*kul mā huwa ‘aqlī fa-huwa waqi‘ī*), one can derive many examples of it from scientific achievements, by means of example, when scientists ‘reasoned’ (*ta‘aqqal*) about an airplane it became possible to realize. In other words, when mental/rational perceptions (*taṣawwur ‘aqlī*) submit to the causality system, they can be realized in reality.

17. About Hegel, for Arabic references check: the works of Imam ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Imām, his published books and translations, and the translation of the first part of Kants’ book ‘*Dhāhiriyāt al-Rūḥ*’ by Muṣṭafa Safwān (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ā, [n.d.]) publishing title ‘*Ilm Dhuhūr al-‘Aql*’.

18. See details in our book: *Madkhal ilā Falsafat al-‘Ulūm* [introduction to the Science of Philosophy], two Volumes, 1st edition (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ā) especially Volume two.

19. Jean Ullmo, *La pensée scientifique moderne*. (Paris Flammarion 1969).

20. Cf. Jean-Pièrre Vernant, *Les origines de la pensée Grecque*. p. 133 (PUF, 1981).

21. Jean Ullmo, *ibid*.

22. Al-Jāḥiẓ, Abū Uthmān ‘Amr ibn Baḥr. *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabīyīn* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, [n.d.])

23. Al-Shahristānī *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, ed. by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Muḥammad al-Mutawwakil (Cairo: Mu‘asasat al-Halabī, 1968).

24. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

CHAPTER 2

Arab Cultural Time and the Problematic of Development

The Constituted Reason and Arab Culture

When we described in the previous chapter the distinction evoked by Lalande between the ‘constituting reason’ and the ‘constituted reason’ we indicated that the concept of ‘Arab reason’ as employed here applies more to the ‘constituted reason’ as formed within and through Arab culture, namely, as being the set of principles and rules proposed by Arab culture to its followers as a basis of knowledge acquisition, and we could say that it is imposed as an ‘epistemological order’ (*nizām ma‘rifī*).¹

We will disregard now the ‘exchange of influence’ relationship between the constituting mind and the constituted mind which we have outlined, and direct our attention in this chapter towards constituted ‘Arab reason’ as the extant epistemological system, which underpins the episteme and the means of its production (or elaboration) within Arab culture, and we will ask what do we mean by the ‘epistemological system’ and how it exerts its effect within any culture? Thus, if the constituted reason, as evinced by Lalande himself, is ‘a system of predetermined and accepted rules in a certain historical period’, then which historical period of the eras in Arab culture do we imply when discussing ‘Arab reason’ as this ‘matrix of rules’? Finally, what is our general strategy for this critical analysis?

This chapter, where we will try to provide answers to these intertwined questions, raises the issue of methodology and perspective, and explicates the attendant founding, fundamental concepts.

We can define the concept of ‘epistemological system’ *Épistémè* in its initial and abstract definition through the following expression: the episteme is a set of concepts, principles and procedures that provides knowledge with its unconscious structure, in a certain period of history. This definition may be reduced as follows: the episteme in a certain culture is its unconscious substructure.² But what does this mean?

When we discuss a ‘structure’, we basically infer the existence of constants and variables, and therefore when we discuss the structure of ‘Arab reason’ we actually mean constants and variables of the Arab culture that constituted it. Does this mean that we are unifying ‘reason’ and the ‘culture’, to which reason belongs, on the basis that they are two manifestations of a single ‘structure’?

Let it be so, but on condition that we adopt the celebrated definition of culture, which states that: ‘culture is what remains when everything else is forgotten’.³ Hence, if we assert that ‘Arab reason’ is the effect produced and still being produced by Arab culture on the Arab individual, after he has forgotten whatever he has learned of this culture, we are not far from the truth. What remains is the ‘constant’ and what is ‘forgotten’ is the ‘variable’. What persists is the constant of Arab culture, and this is ‘Arab reason’ itself.

Following this general and abstract definition of Arab reason, which permits us now to remove the quotation marks, we proceed in explaining, as far as possible, its components, so we may ask: what has remained *invariable* in Arab culture since the ‘pre-Islamic era of ignorance’ – *al-‘aşr al-jāhili* – until today? (We employ the idiom of the ‘Jāhiliyah’ by placing it also between quotation marks for a while because of the consensus, at least implicitly, that the formation of Arab culture originally began at some indeterminate point in that time.) We will return to discuss this issue in the next chapter.

What has remained invariable in Arab culture since the ‘Jāhiliyah era’ up until today? This question might seem valid and innocuous but, in fact, it is ‘insidious’ and misleading, particularly given that it might, itself, become an answer if it were perceived in the form of a negative question. However, what qualifies it as ‘insidious’ from our perspective is that it masks and conceals another latent contradictory question, deeper and explicitly expressive, that is consequently more apt to destabilise the prevailing perception. This ‘repressed’ question is: what has changed in the Arab culture since the ‘Jāhiliyah’ to today? We have no doubt that an Arab reader – one who has a mind formed within and only through Arab culture – will probably be perturbed and agitated by the second question

in a way different from the first. The first question is benign or even 'soporific', while the second is provocative, with far-reaching implications within our 'inner' thoughts; it is therefore closer and more germane to our subject.

What has changed in the Arab culture since 'pre-Islam' to today? This question, too, can be interpreted as a negative question, so does it have greater legitimacy than the first one? The proof of that is that we all feel that Imru' al Qays, 'Amr Ibn Kulthūm, 'Antarah, Lubayd, al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī, Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā . . . and Ibn 'Abbās, 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, Mālik, Sībawayh, al-Shāfi'ī, Ibn Ḥanbal . . . and al-Jāhiz al-Mubarrad, al-Aṣma'ī . . . and al-Ash'arī, al-Ghazālī, al-Junayd, Ibn Taymīyah . . . and before him al-Ṭabarī, al-Mas'ūdī, Ibn al-Athīr . . . and al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Ibn Khaldūn, and later, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, al-'Aqqād, and the list gets longer . . . we find them all here still living with us, as if they all stand on the stage of a single scene, the scene of the Arab culture which has not yet drawn down the curtains, not even once.

No person can object to this 'claim', except one who has a genuine and convincing sense, when reading of one of the above personalities, that he does not understand him, or that he is incompatible with him, or that he does not listen to him or approve of his discourse or logic, or at least has the impression of the other's belonging to a world unlike his own. How can any such objections occur when all of us children of Arab culture learn reading, perception, listening, speaking and logic from our childhood and throughout our education, from the 'protagonists' of this culture, some of whom we mentioned above? Who of 'Arab' intellectuals can proclaim that he belongs to a different world than theirs, or that he no longer has a connection with the heroes of the 'immortal' theatre of Arab culture?

Thus, there are many unchanged things in Arab culture from the pre-Islamic period of the 'Jāhiliyah' up until today, constituting in their entirety the constants of this culture and, thus, establishing the substructure of the mind belonging to it: that is, Arab reason.

We do not wish to pre-empt the line of our discourse by raising this issue, which will be the subject of analysis in the forthcoming chapters, but we hope that by mentioning it in this 'provocative' approach, we will allow the reader to discern that the *time (zaman)* of a culture, any culture, is not necessarily correlated to the time of states or socio-political events, and that 'cultural time' does not correlate with various (chronological) measures of time or the normal, socio-political reckoning of it, because it

has a special calibration of its own. Inasmuch as culture is, indeed, what remains 'after everything else is forgotten', then what remains of a culture is what characterises it, namely, its 'time'.⁴

If we take into consideration the connection we have just revealed between the constants of a defined culture, and the structure of the mind belonging to it, it becomes imperative to posit that the time of the structure of the mind belonging to a certain culture is equivalent to the time of that same culture; thus, the time of Arab reason is the same as the time of Arab culture, and as we have previously indicated, the historical protagonists of that culture are still in motion, in front of us, on its eternal stage, perpetually pulling us towards them.

To clarify this claim, we shed light on this new concept, the concept of 'cultural time', which we have subsumed here among the procedural concepts we denoted in this section of the book, enabling us, we hope, to better explore the subject of our discourse.

The Subconscious and Culture

When we connected the structure of the reason (or mind) belonging to a certain culture with what remains of that culture among individuals belonging to it after they have forgotten what they have acquired in it of different views and theories and schools of thought, in all the different means of dissemination, that means we consider this relationship between culture and the reason (or mind) to which it belongs as an *unconscious* relationship, on the basis that what is forgotten is not vitiated, but rather remains alive in the unconscious mind, as Freud emphasises. This means that the subconscious structure of the mind, belonging to a certain culture, is shaped or constituted *unconsciously* within and through this culture, which also works unconsciously on *reproducing* this same culture. This is to say that the mind is a device of knowledge (effective and prevalent), is produced and producing at the same time, in an unconscious manner.

If it is admissible, and useful, to utilise the concept of 'cognitive unconscious' when studying the structure of the individual mind of a given human being, as did the great psychologist Jean Piaget, it may be admissible to utilise the same concept also in regard to communities and nations, or more precisely, in regard to cultures. And then it will be useful, pertaining to our discourse, to elaborate on a cognitive unconscious peculiar to Arab

culture, which is moreover peculiar to the educated Arab intellectual. But first, what does 'cognitive unconscious' mean?

Piaget used the concept of cognitive unconscious (*l'inconscient cognitif*) in his discourse on the constitution of the subconscious of the mind, the individual mind, inspired by the meaning given by Freud to the unconscious (emotional, behavioural), which consists of a psychological power based on desires and suppressed feelings that are oriented towards a defined issue. Thus, just like a person who loves his paramour cognises the consequences of his behaviour (his emotional behaviour as the end-object of his love that is his beloved), so a cognisant person recognises the consequences of his (intellectual) behaviour, namely the subject related to his cognitive act.

Nevertheless, neither the lover nor the cognisant realises the mechanisms manipulating his or her behaviour. For he who loves does not know or realise the method through which he loves, nor the reasons of his love, nor why it was intense to such a degree, and so forth; and, similarly, the cognisant person does not agonise nor does he realise the method through which he knows, nor the mechanisms governing the process of his cognition (at least in a certain stage of his cultural development).

Thus, Piaget affirms the admissibility and credibility of employing the concept of the cognitive unconscious to indicate the total operations and hidden mental activities governing the process of cognition in the individual. Accordingly, we cannot think, for example, without the unconscious utilisation of basic and essential concepts of the process of thinking, such as the concepts of 'bigger', 'smaller', 'precedent', 'equal', 'before', 'after', 'beneath', 'above', 'cause', and so on; we do not think about the meaning of the word 'bigger' when we estimate that 'this thing is bigger than that'. Such concepts form the cognitive unconscious for individuals, as expressed by Piaget; they are its foundations and components.⁵

We will adopt the concepts of Piaget, and transfer them from the field of substantive psychology, from which Piaget proceeded, to the field of epistemology of culture where we are proceeding and so we will say that the Arab cognitive unconscious is the set of conceptions, perceptions and mental activities defining the view of the Arab human – namely, the individual belonging to Arab culture – in relation to the universe, the human being, society and history, and so forth. Therefore, when we elaborate on the substructure of Arab reason, we primarily indicate these concepts and intellectual activities provided by Arab culture to its members, which constitute the cognitive unconscious for them, unconsciously orienting their intellectual and moral premises and their view of themselves as well as others.⁶

Why invoke the concept of cognitive unconscious while we intend to expound on the concept of cultural *time*?

Undoubtedly, the concept of cognitive unconscious as used here is a procedural concept preventing us from falling into unscientific conceptions that are commended to us by some rigid concepts, such as the concept of 'rationality' based on admitting – explicitly or implicitly – the existence of a 'natural mindset' which is above time and history and particular to each community or 'race'.⁷ The concept of cognitive unconscious is a fruitful concept of procedure because it enables us to restore epistemological procedure to a device of concepts and mechanisms that are not actually detected but are apt to monitor, observe and analyse, instead of restoring it – namely, knowledge – to concepts of 'mentalities' or 'intellectualities' or other arid and misguided concepts.

On the other hand, the use of this concept in the field wherein we are proceeding affords us a productive and inspiring comparison. We can thus connect the time of culture to the time of the unconscious. It is known that the unconscious has no history because, by nature, it does not acknowledge the existence of a 'natural' time; we would say that it has its own time which is completely different from conscious time, the time of wakefulness and consciousness. The time of the unconscious is similar to the time of a dream, for it does not recognise chronological or geographical distances, nor does it recognise the law of *a priori* and *a posteriori*, the law of *causality*. Such a cultural time, and also the time of the substructure of the mind belonging to a certain culture, does not induce changes at the same tempo as those occurring for emotional and social time, let alone the natural time governed by astrodynamics, as believed in antiquity.

So cultural time is just like the time of the unconscious, an intertwined and wavelike time, extended in a spiral form which renders several cultural phases coexistent in the same thought (or intellect), and thus in the same mental structure, just like the coexistence of different suppressed desires attributed to different psychological, mental and biological stages of life such as the desires of childhood, adolescence, youth and maturity, in addition to instinctive and biological drives that constitute the activity of the unconscious and its functionality, all of which transpire in the absence of the psychological unconscious, as demonstrated by Freud.

Therefore, if we considered, for instance, that *certain perceptions or beliefs or concepts belong to an earlier stage of intellectual and cultural development*, then this does not imply that those perceptions, beliefs and concepts had edged at the periphery of that phase of development. On

the contrary, it is probable – and perhaps most likely – that those perceptions, beliefs and concepts can survive a subsequent phase of development along with entirely new perceptions, beliefs and concepts that form the cultural ‘identity’ (of science or philosophy or literature) for those new phases.

While the gap between the old concepts and the new might widen to a degree of antagonism and contradiction, it might, however, occur – and perhaps most probably – that these will all still persist, not only within the collective thought expressing the related culture, but also within *individual* thought belonging to that culture, in a manner that they might both subsist within an individual’s consciousness, either in a state of conflict or in a state of consensual or dissentious ‘coexistence’. This will reflect on the ideational-cognitive behaviour of the person, so he will be ‘balanced’ or ‘high-strung,’ ‘sane’ or ‘insane,’ but in all conditions he will experience a single cultural time, as long as the new has not effected a final break with the old, namely, as long as the ‘system of knowledge’ has remained unchanged, as long as it is possible for the ‘old’ to enter into a dialogue with the ‘new’ – implying that the outcome of development has not yet reached the point of no return, the point where the transition from new to old is no longer possible.

For culture, thus, time is not just a ‘period of movement’, but also a period of no motion (*al-sukūn*), so to speak. By borrowing the terminology utilised by Ibrāhīm bin Sayyār al-Nazzām, the famous Mu‘tazilite *mutakallim* (dialectical theologian), we could say that the movement in the cultural time is two: ‘dependence’ – *ḥarakat al-i‘timād* (lit., the operation of dependence), i.e., self-motion: that is the movement of tension inherent in the body about to be released (like an arrow before its launch) and ‘transfer’ *ḥarakat al-naqlah* (lit., the operation of transfer), i.e., the transference from one place to another, from one stage to another. It is clear that the classification of culture – any culture – into stages is only valid when the movement takes the form of a transition. Whereas when the movement represents a dependence, then the cultural stages – or phases of development of a particular thought which means the same – remain cumulative intersecting, rival, neither being ‘single’ nor separable or ‘multiple’, just as in the case of the contents of the unconscious as perceived by Freud.

I would say that the movement in Arab culture was and still is a movement of dependence and not that of a transition, since its time period is set by ‘motionlessness’ (*sukūn*) and not by ‘motion’ in spite of all the movements, dynamics and activities it has undergone.

This claim requires justification, of course. Perhaps the reader will arrive at the same conviction, or at least will be more apt to understand the motives of this claim when he or she reaches the last chapter of this book. Nonetheless, we must propose some factors that may convince, even temporarily, or in other words, facilitate the amelioration and enrichment of these initial determinations of the subject of our discourse. In this context, we might ask: was not syntax born with Sībawayh? Was not the *uṣūl al-fiqh* defined at its inception with al-Shāfi‘ī? Was not the ‘complete’ or semi-complete historical chronicle generated in Islam with Ibn Ishāq and al-Wāqidī? Did not al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad present the complete Arabic dictionary and the complete prosody? Weren’t the issues of the theology of the *kalām* determined with Wāṣil bin ‘Aṭā’ and his contemporaries? Was not Shī‘ite thought, doctrine, discourse and politics perfected with Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq? . . . And last, but not least, did not these people and all alike live in a single era, the Era of Codification – the writing of history, the era of the general cultural institution which was and remains a referential authority for Arab thought and Arab culture up until now as we will show in the next chapter?

In order to realise the importance of this claim in relation to our current quest, we must make a comparison, however brief, between this present situation and that of Europe. We have opted for Europe because its modern cultural time imposes itself in all fields, thereby disturbing and tearing apart in our innermost, personal cultural time . . . our protracted, *static* time.

Europeans have chronicled culture for centuries, starting with the birth of (Jesus) the Messiah and asserting the existence of distinct phases – Greek thought in the fourth century BC and French and German thought, or European in general, in the eighteenth century AD, for example. They establish thereby – whether in conformity with historical fact or not – a connection between the phases of development of European thought, rendering it pervasive in their consciousness from the eighth or ninth century BC up to the present time. Whenever they consider this ‘European Thought’ (which stretches in their consciousness throughout twenty-eight centuries or more) in the terms of what we have adopted here in regard to cultural time, they classify it into three cultural epochs: Antiquity (Greco-Roman); the Middle Ages (the Christian era); and the Modern Age. We are here before a historical continuity forming a referential time frame which is fixed and clear. And, whether this continuity is real or imagined, or whether it is seen as extending in a connected movement or through ‘ruptures’, the significant point is the function it has in the field of conscious-

ness. It ‘organises’ history, distinguishing between *a priori* and *a posteriori*, making it impossible to effect, even on the level of dream consciousness, a return to what came before in order to replace the present. In other words, this continuity, regardless of whether real or imagined, provides a consciousness of history for its possessors, orienting them towards the future, without denying their past, and also without perpetually placing this past in front of them so that they read the future through it. The past here is placed in its ‘normative’ status in history, as well as – and this is more essential – in the consciousness of this history.

Those in the Arab world do not chronicle or evaluate their culture in terms of centuries – except theatrically. They still write history using a time frame of ruling dynasties: poetry or literature, or Arab thought in general, in the ‘Umayyad era’ or the ‘Abbāsīd age’ or ‘Fāṭimid era’, and so on; and if some embrace the European classification as a referential time frame, they classify Arab culture into two epochs: Arab culture in the ‘Middle Ages’ and Arab culture in the ‘Modern era’, as for the era of ‘Antiquity’ it has no place in Arab ‘history’, which obviously renders the concept of an Arab ‘Middle Ages’ problematic given the lack of a preceding element that would justify its ‘mediation’. Even so, when Arabs tolerate the European ‘tradition’ and chronicle their culture using ‘centuries’, they find themselves utilising the Hijri calendar concerning the first period – the time of Arab culture in the ‘Middle Ages’ which extends to the seventh or eighth century of the Hijrah (i.e., the ‘emigration’ of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina (then Yathrib) in 622 CE), before we transition into the Christian Era in describing the second period – the time of Arab thought during the ‘Renaissance’ (*al-Nahḍah*) which is posited as beginning at the start of the nineteenth century CE. As for the period between these Arab ‘Middle Ages’ and ‘Renaissance’, namely, between the eighth century Hijrah or the fifteenth century AD and the thirteenth century of the Hijrah or the nineteenth century AD, there is a ‘missing link’²⁸ in Arab history . . . and, likewise, a deep and bewildering gap in Arab consciousness.

These observations may seem insignificant, and some consider them a deviation towards ‘stereotyped issues’, however, so be it. Yet, why do we find such to be the case or seek to evaluate such as ‘insignificant’ or ‘trivial’ issues?

We must admit that this is due to the fact that we are accustomed to this ‘torn history’. And, if we perceive this issue through what we have evinced here as cultural time and cognitive unconscious, we realise the gravity of this ‘trivial’ history in the scope of the historical consciousness

of Arabs. This relates, in fact, to the transition between two completely different referential systems, each featuring its own time frame, which renders our consciousness of the time period controlled by our awareness of space; thus, we treat time in the same manner that we treat space. Time is a static, motionless present, and if our consciousness does not perceive a part of it, then this absence exhibits the form of a spatial absence, a perceptual void not a moral one, an absenteeism that ceases when senses return. Hence, the past and the present alternate in the arena of Arab consciousness, to the extent that the past can compete vigorously with the present even to the degree that it appears to be the 'present' itself.

What does this indicate?

First, it indicates that the history of Arab thought has not yet been written, that the history of Arab culture needs to be rearranged, that Arab cultural time has yet to be documented, defined and identified.

It is true that we distinguish between: 1) the *ʿaṣr al-jāhilī* (pre-Islamic era); 2) the *ʿaṣr al-islāmī* (Islamic era); and 3) the *ʿaṣr al-naḥḍah* (Renaissance era). However, this distinction is entirely superficial as we do not perceive it either through our consciousness, or by our perception as phases of evolution, where the later abolish the former, nor do we perceive them as distinct cultural epochs with attendant characteristics for each – rendering them connected or disconnected. On the contrary, we perceive these 'three eras' as separate islands, isolated from each other. The gap, in our consciousness, separating what we call the 'era of the Jāhilīyah' and what we term the 'Islamic era' is not any less deep or wide than the chasm separating – *perpetually* in our consciousness – the 'Islamic era', usually perceived as ending by the eighth century of the Hijrah and the 'Naḥḍah' dating, as previously mentioned, to the nineteenth century CE. What ensues, then, is the presence of these three 'cultural islands' simultaneously in contemporary Arab consciousness.

All the above indicates that any one of us when moving consciously from the 'Jāhilīyah era' to the 'Islamic era' to the age of the 'Naḥḍah' does not sense the transition from one time to another but probably perceives only a transition from one space to another: from the Arabian Peninsula (*the muʿallaqāt al-kaʿbah*, and the *sūq ʿuqāz*)⁹ to Baghdad (in the 'Abbāsīd period) to Cairo (of the Fāṭimid reign) to Fez and Cordoba (of the Almohavid era) . . . to the Egypt of Muḥammad ʿAlī and al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and Luṭfī al-Sayyid . . . or the Algeria of Ibn Bādīs, and so forth.

This observation leads to a further remark we formulate as the 'intersection of cultural times' in the thought of Arab intellectuals, in both cognitive and ideological fields. Concerning the cognitive field, the Arab

intellectual is still as he was in the 'Umayyad era', consuming ancient knowledge as though it is new, whether the source was 'purely' Arab or a foreign 'intrusion'. This was the case yesterday, and is still the same today. Likewise, in the ideological field, this intellectual has remained the same since the 'Umayyad era', continuing to conceive through his consciousness past conflicts as enmeshed with other kinds of conflicts – those of his present. In addition to the above, the effect of translation and direct contact with foreign cultures, whether during the 'Middle Ages' or the 'Modern Age', the 'intersection of cultural times' in the thought of the Arab intellect covers both levels in his consciousness, horizontal and vertical, synchronic and diachronic, making it difficult to impose any kind of systemisation or hierarchy within this consciousness.

This fact, the reality of the 'intersection of cultural times' inside the thinking of Arab intellectuals, explains a disturbing phenomenon in modern Arab thought, the phenomenon of 'vacillating intelligentsia' who escape through Arab 'cultural time' from the 'reasonable/rational' to the 'unreasonable/irrational', from left to right, with an ease difficult to be believed. Without mentioning particular names it is sufficient to indicate the transition, regarding the 'primary' positions concerning the issues of 'unity', 'socialism', 'democracy', 'peace', 'Arabism' and 'secularism', which are the major and prevailing issues in modern Arab thought. Similarly, it is sufficient to allude again to the phenomenon of the 'exodus' from the rational to the irrational still prevailing even in recent years among intellectuals and Arab *'ulamā'* (scholars). Not only does the phenomenon of 'cultural exodus' represent a form of regression and 'repentance' (*al-tawbah*) in modern Arab thought but it also illustrates another feature founded on the deviation from knowledge acquisition, which confirms that the inner enigma is not a problem of alternation of choice regarding ideology, but basically a problem of *epistemological instability*. Our forefathers used to conclude when expressing a point of view by saying, 'God knows best' or 'this matter has dual meaning . . .', while today the comment that has replaced the humbleness of ancient *'ulamā'* is the one encapsulated by the confirmatory formula: 'this one knows better'. This is because reality and what is assumed as true for many Arab 'readers and intellectuals' and for many authors and researchers in the Arab world, as well as for the average intellectuals, is that which the most recently read book asserts or perhaps the latest thing they have learned, indicating a firm willingness to absorb and an absence of critical analysis within the activity of 'modern' Arab reason. This mind tolerates mental representation to a degree almost similar

to an infant's toleration of visual sensory representations displayed before its eyes, forming its own world which lacks the third dimension, a world as if on a videotape where in the present, the preceding is forgotten as if it never existed.

Culture and History

This multifold phenomenon, the intersection of cultural times and cultural vacillation in our current cultural life, presents an urgent task – the task of rewriting Arab history and restoring its historicity. In fact, the prevailing Arab cultural history is actually merely rumination, reiteration and reproduction, in an improper fashion, of the same cultural history written by our ancestors under the pressure of contemporaneous conflicts of the eras, and within the constraints of scientific and methodological potentialities available at those times; and, therefore, we are still prisoners of the ancient perceptions, conceptions and methodologies that they confronted or employed, inducing us, imperceptibly, to engage in conflicts of the past and its problems, to render our present time replete with the problems of our past, and to thus perceive the future according to the predispositions attendant to problems of the past and its conflicts. We are, therefore, in need of rewriting Arab cultural history through a critical spirit oriented by our ambitions as Arabs for progress and unity.

Indeed, cultural heritage constitutes the primary component of the inclination towards unity among Arabs throughout all times, and it stimulates this tendency even more strongly in the present era. Despite this, it is essential to recognise that we have not yet been able to organise the relationship between the component parts of that traditional heritage on the one hand, and between tradition and ourselves on the other hand, in a way that would permit it to establish our Arab self according to the requirements of our time. Perhaps the following observations will emphasise the extent to which our cultural history demands to be rewritten or reconstructed.

Arab cultural history, as we read it today in books, schools and universities, is a history of 'groups', a history of 'classes' and a history of 'categories' and so on. It is a fragmentary history, the history of differences of opinions and not a history of constructing opinions. It is true that this way of the ancients was dictated by their circumstances, yet we may justify

it also in view of the motives driving them. Their method of writing history is, itself, a part of history, therefore, it makes no sense to blame them, as blame – all of it – falls on our blind compliance with what was the outcome of specific historical circumstances and on our dealing with it as the absolute truth. This compliance diverts us from discovering the whole, which actually bears the unity of Arab culture. Hence, behind the ‘history’ of differences, diversity, conflict and separation, is the history of unity, integration and interconnectedness; therefore, over the ruins of history of fractions – shredded and dispersed – we must construct the history of the unified whole.

Arab cultural history, as it persists today, is a history of sciences and arts of knowledge in isolation from each other: in this, the history of *madhāhib* (schools) of *fiqh* – if any – is in complete isolation from schools of syntax, and both schools are isolated, each at their own time, from schools of theology and philosophy, and so forth. To be sure, we are not against specialisation, but we must respect, within the scope of specialisation, the connection between specialisations in bygone eras of culture, for instance, the jurist (*faqīh*) was a syntactician and the syntactician a jurist, and perhaps we may find both among *mutakallimūn* (theologians) and rhetoricians, just as we know that in our cultural history there are ‘*ulamā*’ and *fuqahā*’ in mathematics or astronomy or botany, it also known that there were *fuqahā*’ among the philosophers such as al-Ghazālī and Ibn Ḥazm and philosophers among the *fuqahā*’ such as Ibn Rushd.

Thus, behind the multiplicity and diversity of our past culture lies integration and unity, and this is something neglected by our prevalent cultural history. The consequence of this neglect is that any *faqīh* among us does not acquire of the past *fiqh* anything but the opposition of some *fuqahā*’ to philosophy for example, just as the syntacticians of today do not acquire of past syntax anything but the opposition of some syntacticians to logicians (*munāṭaqah*), while all of these disputes were either scientific ones, that is, the result of *ijtihād*, or a propagation of political disputes, in both cases, they were dictated by circumstantial factors; and therefore there must remain a connection to these circumstances in order to pave the way towards what is truly historical – that is, towards what is developed, integrated and unified.

Prevailing Arab cultural history is stagnant, as we previously observed. Consequently, it does not convey the evolution of Arab thought and its transition from one state to another, it rather introduces an ‘exhibition’ or a ‘market’ of past cultural deposit, all persisting simultaneously where the former coexists with the recent, just as old merchandise is displayed together with new merchandise during exhibitions and in market places. And the result is the intersection of cultural times in our conscious awareness

of our cultural history, depriving us from the historical sense, rendering past episodes displayed before us as though concurrent scenes and not as consecutive phases. Thence, our present transforms into an 'exhibit' of facts about our past, making us live our past synchronously in our present, without variation, without history.

And as our cultural history is marked by overlapping cultural times, it is also marked by the interference or interpolation of time and space. Our cultural history is associated with our sense of place, perhaps even more than its association with time: our cultural history is the history of Kūfah, Baṣrah, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, al-Qayrawān (Kairouan), Fez, Seville and Cordoba. This makes it a history of 'cultural islands', truncated in time similarly to their detachment in physical space. The outcome is the presence of these cultural islands in the modern Arab consciousness, not throughout succession or synchronisation, but an ahistoric asynchrony, rendering our 'historical' consciousness founded on *accumulation* and not on synchronous contiguity, on anarchy and not order.

Last but not least, it is essential to observe what dominates the relation between our cultural history and world cultural history such as the turmoil and disruption which have been to the detriment of our history and its role and position in global history. European cultural history was founded on autonomy, beginning from Athens, proceeding towards Rome and then to Florence before arriving in modern Europe.

The entire process was to the detriment of Arabs, to dispense with their cultural history, to arbitrarily dismiss the role of Arab culture that is of key importance to global cultural history. In fact, if some Orientalists were 'objective' they would acknowledge that Arabs were a link between ancient Greece and Europe. However, they admit this link only fleetingly, before quickly dispensing with it by reverting Europe surreptitiously to its Greek origins.

While Arab culture was not in fact merely a link between (ancient) Greek and modern European cultures, but actually a *reproduction* of Greco-European culture was, at the beginning, a reproduction of Arab-Islamic culture. Therefore, the presence of Arab-Islamic culture was a substantial presence in 'European' global cultural history and not merely a provisional, intermediate existence. And we must affirm that today, not just by claims or emotional self-praise, but rather by working on rewriting our cultural history and rearranging the relationship between our history and global cultural history on objective and scientific bases, and with a critical spirit.

Thought and Progress

The observations raised above, whether concerning the interference and overlap of cultural times or the cultural exodus in Arab thought or the prevalent anarchy and disruption of our cultural history, pose the problem of *progress* within this thought in particular, and thereafter within Arab culture in general. In fact, this issue was posed for discussion from the beginning, namely, since we began discussing what we mean by 'Arab reason' and particularly since we began dealing with the unity of Arab cultural time and its static state.

Whatever the case, perhaps it is clear now, after the afore mentioned observations, that it is not possible either to write a history that 'conforms' to Arab culture, nor to transform Arab cultural consciousness from an a-historical consciousness into a historical one, unless this problem – that is, the problem of *progress* in Arab thought and Arab culture – is decided upon, even if in a temporary yet methodological manner. We say temporary, believing that any viewpoint in this particular matter will remain, and should remain, subject to modification and change, as long as we lack information about our heritage in more than one field, and as long as our methodologies of research do not fully comply with scientific requirements considering our 'continuous' need for self-determination before the challenges that we face from every direction and on every level. Moreover, and above all this and beyond, because history is not written *once*, but is constantly rewritten, in this context we would make the following observations about the problem of progress in Arab reason.

The prevailing idea about the development of Arab thought in particular and Arab culture in general is quite primitive and simple, giving the appearance of being almost axiomatic and without the need for cogent proof: we typically suppose that Arab thought had modest beginnings, of one degree or another of significance, at some point in what we call the 'Jāhiliyah era', which is, as most would say, a cultural period that stretched for around fifty to one hundred years before the dawn of Islam, before Arab thought continued its evolution in an ascending fashion from the beginning of Islam until approximately the eighth century of the Hijrah, followed by the beginning of what we call the 'Age of Decline' (*ʿaṣr al-inḥiṭāt*), persisting in the form of a sporadically horizontal line (a sign of cessation and stagnation) and then rapidly plunging to the bottom (a sign of retreat and decline).

Then a new history of Arab thought begins from the beginning of the

nineteenth century CE, the start of what we call the ‘age of the modern Arab Renaissance’ (al-Nahḍah), which we envisage as a continuity of an ascending progress. It is an attractive and comfortable picture because it looks simple and clear, but as soon as one begins further consideration of it, clouds of ambiguity begin to envelop it from every side. So let us make a few observations.

It is clear that the picture we established here above of the ‘evolution’ of Arab thought is grounded on postulating *three* beginnings. In the first instance, there is the very first beginning, which starts at some indeterminate point during the ‘Jāhilīyah era’; whereas, in the second instance, there is the second beginning initiated with the outset of Islam to form the beginning of ‘history’, bearing in mind that its precedence consisted of a ‘pre-history’; and finally, in the third instance is the beginning of the modern Arab Nahḍah, which is also considered as the beginning of a ‘modern history’.

It is also clear that in such a case it is not possible to consider the matter of ‘evolution’ unless from one of the three beginnings and from within their own particular times; in other words, it is not admissible to speak of a single history for both Arab thought and Arab culture, but we must rather consider three ‘periods’ during the process of history writing; the pre-Islamic Jāhilīyah era, the Islamic era, and the Nahḍah. There is no need for historians – in this context – to connect these periods to each other, because each of them is considered as separate and independent, and not as a cause or effect.

We may go further with this concept, and wonder: who can seriously argue that: the Islamic era was the result or the continuity of the pre-Islamic Jāhilīyah or that the Nahḍah was the extension of the Islamic era? Obviously, it does not imply that there is an ‘epistemological break’ between any of these, disrupting the continuity, but it is mainly related to three ‘islands’, isolated from each other, and therefore the problem of ‘evolution’ in Arab thought, in this context, will have no meaning but merely within the Jāhilīyah era alone, or within the Islamic era alone, or solely within that of the Nahḍah, that is within each epoch *separately*.

This is only one side of the picture, while the other side appears if we raise the issue of progress (*al-taqaddum*) in Arab thought, at the level of the epistemological break, or the ‘leap’ if we must use the language of dialectics. If we assess the issue at this level we would be forced to radically reconsider the previous ‘clear’ and ‘comfortable’ picture, especially since we know that the initiative of modern Arab Nahḍah was based, and still intends to be based, on the ‘revival of the past’ and not on isolation

from it. Similarly, we know that Islam was not founded for the purpose of ‘denying’ and severing relations with the past, but rather for the purpose of ‘reforming’ and bringing the nation back to the religious belief of Abraham, the primogenitor of Arabs.

This is true if we restrict our analysis of the issue to the context of the time frame alone. But if we attempt to connect time and space, then the pattern will be obliterated in a confusing and worrisome manner. For what we call the pre-Islamic Jāhilīyah era, for instance, is only spatially related to one of many regions covered by Arab thought, existing in the present or past days, and that region is the ‘Arabian Peninsula’, stated between quotation marks because the Jāhilīyah era extended only to certain parts of it, not all while other regions, such as Syria, Palestine and Iraq, in addition to Egypt, North Africa and Andalusia, are extrinsic to the frame of time and space, determining what we call the Jāhilīyah era. However, this does not imply that these regions were not associated with it; on the contrary, all Arab countries have, in a way that is beyond dimensions of space and time, *dwelt* in that ‘Jāhilīyah era’ and they are still adopting it as a part of their cultural history. Following the same pattern is the Islamic era itself, which requires differentiation between cultural regional domains, where some have lived in dimensions of space and time lived previously by others. Cairo experienced – in terms of the dimension of time – during the Fatimid reign what Baghdad had experienced during the peak of the ‘Abbāsī era; Fez and Cordoba experienced what Cairo and Baghdad had experienced earlier. This resulted in what might be expressed as a ‘phenomenon of cultural rumination’ that still exists in many works of writing transmitted to us, and which reflect each other and hence render them all carriers of a static culture, devoid of motion except that kind of motion which might be described by the Sayyār al-Nazzām as ‘dependence’ (*ḥarakat al-i‘timād*), as previously mentioned, in spite of the ‘natural’ intervals of chronology separating the works of different authors.

And if we move forward towards Arab thought in the era of the Naḥḍah, we will find ourselves confronting the same phenomenon. The reason is that it is meaningless to concede, from the *spatial* standpoint, that the beginning of this era is in the early nineteenth century, as claimed, except for Egypt and Damascus. Whereas other Arab countries *dimensionally* experienced this same beginning at other times to varying degrees. In Morocco, for example, we experienced, between the 1930s and the 1950s, what Egypt and Damascus experienced between the beginning of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth, which means that in Morocco we experienced in a quarter of a century what other Arab countries

experienced over a century and a half, and consequently, the cultural synchronisation in the Arab world, the eastern and western parts (the Maghreb and the Levant), only began in the mid-fifties of the twentieth century. Before that, in Morocco, we used to live the 'past' renaissance of the Levant as being the 'next' renaissance for Morocco. There is no doubt that the disparity that occurred between the Arab Maghreb and Mashriq in this particular area occurred in reciprocal fashion among other countries of the East as well.

These observations are conducive to determining two opposite results. On the one hand, there is interference between cultural 'eras' in Arab thought, from the pre-Islamic Jāhiliyah until now, resulting in a single *cultural* time, experienced by the Arab intellectual anywhere in the Arab world, as a static time, forming an essential and substantial part of his cultural identity and his cultured persona. And the conspicuous character of this single Arab cultural time is the existence of the former, not intrinsically with recent work on improving and fulfilling it, but rather adjacent and in parallel to it, competing and restraining it and on the other hand, there is a dissociation between time and space in the history of Arab culture, a dissociation that makes some Arab countries experience dimensionally on the rubrics of thought, culture and consciousness, what other countries had lived before, which means the absence of cultural synchronisation at the level of the Arab world, or at least not its full realisation in any period of Arab history until today.

How shall we deal with these two contradictory facts?

Undoubtedly, these two contradictory phenomena reflect, particularly and perhaps directly, givens of Arab political history: conquests (*fūtuḥāt*), changes of capitals or seats of dynasties, as expressed by Ibn Khaldūn with the transition of the ruling power from one family to another; the early political independence of some Arab and Islamic countries; the geopolitical map change of the territories of Arab states and the instability of their common borders; the general connection between culture and the government and its apparatuses, etc. There is no doubt that this is also due to the nature of cultural communication methods available at that time, and especially to the absence of printing presses and their delayed use throughout the entire Arab world.

However, what concerns us here is not the interpretation of these two phenomena, the 'interference of cultural times' along with the absence of cultural synchronisation in Arab thought, in the past and in the present, because whether we have sought their causes and factors of formation in this particular area or the other, within these sources of information or

other available ones, we will find ourselves in all cases confronted by two contradictory aspects, which we will have to deal with in one way or another, and therefore, the persistent question will still be: how should we deal with them?

It is true that we are not proceeding with a positivist attitude aiming only to *describe* the phenomenon. On the contrary, we aspire to this interpretation with the aim of *modification*; for our discourse is to *criticise* Arab reason and not simply to depict or ‘analyse’ it. Nevertheless, we will be vigilant to prevent the desire for ‘interpretation and change’ transporting us as if by a leap over the nature of the reality with which we are dealing and, subsequently, from rendering us oblivious to careful and considered thinking about different approaches and methods for dealing with it for the sake of its interpretation and change.

Thus, we shall consider the two phenomena that were previously depicted as reflective of what we indicate here as the ‘dual/split Arab reality’ (*al-ḥaqīqah al-‘arabīyah al-muzdawijah*), for which we might identify several other manifestations in Arab reality – in what qualifies as Arab (for example, unity/disunity, wealth/poverty, fecundity/aridity, desert/sea, etc.). Within this ‘dual Arab reality’, regional particularities compete with the national generalities, but only intrinsically not extrinsically, and without any of them aspiring to obliterate or deny the other, for if it were to do so, it would nullify itself as the existence of one of them depends on the existence of the other and is conditional upon it.

Thus, the problem of progress in Arab thought cannot be resolved scientifically with the absence of awareness of this dual reality, which constitutes the core of the Arab entity in every sphere. If we regard this entity in its unitary aspect – its general aspect – we will find that Arab cultural time is a unitary time, where eras interfere and ages intersect in the previously depicted framework. However, if we were to observe the same entity through the aspect of its particularities, namely, as being parts of different acquired developmental states throughout history, we would find ourselves facing an absence of cultural synchronisation, that is, facing *several* cultural times, where we could search in each for separate and varying (historical) eras, perhaps even for phases attained by means of ‘intermittent and truncated bits’ in some intellectual and cultural sectors. Nevertheless, awareness of this Arab dual reality will remain negative if it continues to operate at the purely cognitive level, indeed, it will construe, in this case, the mere ‘integration’ of these two contradictory phenomena, subsequently resulting in the admittance of ‘reality’, as if it were the best possible choice. Since we are engaged in a critical position that seeks change, we must also act

from a conscious ideological standpoint, namely, emanating from a position of historicism, one that aspires not only to acquire a correct idea of what was, but also to contribute in producing what should be done, which is in our case to impel Arab thought in the direction of rationalism, the direction of making it come to terms with the accumulation, even if we do not say *sediment* of irrationalism in its structure.

Therefore, the problem of progress in Arab thought should be raised not only in the context of the past (whether there was progress or not?) but also in the context of the future (i.e., how to work towards achieving progress?). In other words, the requirements of the realisation of progress in Arab thought, being in the present and in the future, should be met prior to choosing the approach from which we will consider the problem of progress in Arab thought that has come down to us from the past. And since we aspire for a single or integrated and conjoined Arab thought, through which a cultural synchronisation is achieved, not only among regions of the Arab world but also between us Arabs and the civilised world, in a way allowing us to attain our presence in world thought in the most eminent fashion possible. Therefore, we will have to regard the issue of progress over the past and in current Arab thought and Arab culture through their integrated and conjoined aspects, namely, by means of the *single cultural time*, spanning in Arab reality from the pre-Islamic era of the Jāhilīyah up to the present date, where embracing progress in Arab thought depends on the achievement of an epistemological rupture with it, a rupture predicted on launching a new cultural time, on new bases.

This is our general strategy in this ‘thesis’ that we examine in the remit of this book; the strategy of highlighting the defects of a departed unity for the sake of establishing a better and a stronger one. Sacrificing ‘time’ (*al-zaman*) – namely, by proceeding with the ‘development’ – in our discourse on the substructure of Arab reason and its cultural components – will be aiming at a ‘future time’ towards which we aspire for it to be relevant, connected and transcendent. This sacrifice, or even the overall strategy, is not an arbitrary choice, for it is rather dictated, if not imposed, by the same realities of Arab culture. In this context, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Būḥdība said: ‘structuring is a genie (*jinn*) haunting Arab culture, for eternal structures lie in this culture, and these should be divulged at any cost’.¹⁰ But if we intend to contribute to the disclosure of these structures, it will not be for the sake of finding imaginary originality, beyond time, but rather for the purpose of overcoming it. And in this case, historical analysis will be essential as is structural analysis itself.

We have decided on several methodological issues, and at the end of this chapter, we must pave the way for another decision we ought to take that is also methodological.

The Beginning

When, a short time ago, we raised the issue of the beginning of Arab thought, we were conceiving it under the pressure of the issue of progress (*al-taqaddum*) which we determined as one of the primary axes of this chapter, and that is why many beginnings were revealed before us, and not only one. The beginnings were different from each other due to the difference in Arab cultural times on the one hand, and to the lack of cultural synchronisation among countries of the Arab world, on the other. However, discussing these two essential aspects of Arab culture prompted us to make a strategic and methodological choice based on perceiving this culture as a whole, a unity, a sole cultural time, where all these beginnings, that introduce themselves as if establishing actual cultural eras, dissolve; while the issue actually relates to mere spatial manifestations of the universality of Arab thought and Arab culture (Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Kairouan, Fez, Cordoba and so on).

Still, this strategic choice does not eliminate the dilemma of positing a beginning. It actually exceeds the beginnings that we previously discussed, but in return it raises, *vis-à-vis* the methodological and perceptual levels, the problem of the starting point from which we will begin analysing the composition of the structure of Arab reason, the problem of the beginning of the total restructuring of Arab culture.

How will we determine this starting point?

Whether we antedate this beginning of this ‘structuring’ to the Sumerians or we posit a terminus in the pre-Islamic era, or at the rise of Islam, or if we relate it to a prior or subsequent period, we will always be making a *choice*. And whether we notice and acknowledge this or not, the beginning in all of these cases and perhaps in all other cases as well, is *not* what actually *was*, but what we have chosen it to be. It is legitimate to date the Arab reason back to the ‘mental civilisational substructure of ancient Central Asia’,¹¹ just as it is legitimate to trace a beginning that establishes the same structure – that of Arab reason – in the ‘Jāhiliyah’

or in another earlier or later stage, provided that it would be uniform (non-contradictory) with the meaning given by the researcher to the idiom ‘Arab reason’. For the beginning here derives its legitimacy from the frameworks drawn for the subject and not the other way around.

Nevertheless, we have elected to consider Arab reason, not through what is present from the past, namely, what has remained such as inscriptions, monuments, linguistic origins extending far back into the past, perhaps further than what the scholars have called ‘proto-Arabs’, but we rather preferred to identify and define Arab reason through what is concretely present in it, namely, through the culture that produced it, the Arab culture still preserved today by countless books and tomes, which still represents our cultural identity – the identity that constitutes the essential element in the concept of ‘Arabs’ in present and bygone eras. And as long as this is the case, the scope of choice of the suitable beginning for the definition we have given to ‘Arab reason’ has become confined to the boundaries of this culture which still lives inside of us, namely, in the authoritative point of reference that determines it.

What is this authority then, the referential authority of the Arab reason?
This is what we will determine in the next chapter.

Notes

1. Throughout this book al-Jabri discusses three different epistemological systems and cultural orders of knowledge: those of *bayān*, *burhān* and *ʿirfān*. The indigenous and original Arab-Islamic order is arguably that of the *bayān*, where the term derives from the Arabic tri-literal root (b-y-n) meaning to elucidate, to make [things] clear and where the Qurʾān is referred to as *kitāb mubīn* (a *clear* book). The term in, various forms – including the imperative, is used heavily throughout the Qurʾān wherein explanation is characteristically through demonstration by analogy. The second epistemological order revolves around proof by inferential evidence – *burhān* – a term which is also Qurʾānic and which applies to presenting decisive evidence and, more or less, to the types of proofs and demonstrations common to formal logic and Aristotelean in particular. Its introduction – as a *system* – to Arab-Islamic culture occurred relatively late, in the argument of al-Jabri, where Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* were among the last of his works to be translated, considerably after the major translation projects of the Era of Codification. Among the arguments in support of this contention is that the Muʿtazilah – who were integral to the official state-backed initiative of the Caliph al-Maʾmūn (d. 833 CE) to inculcate the ‘rational of Arab reason’ – relied primarily on the *bayān* in their discourse. Both, the systems of *bayān* and *burhān* were pitted in opposition to the third order, that of the gnostic illuminationism known as *al-ʿirfān*. *Al-ʿirfān* – deriving from the Arabic root (ʿ-r-f) connoting ‘knowing’ – relies on direct *esoteric* knowledge communicated (through inspiration or revelation) directly by the godhead, and it cannot be attained by way of analogy or through rational demon-

stration. According to al-Jabri, it has its roots in the Hellenistic Age and particularly in Hermeticism and Neo-Platonic as well as Neo-Pythagorean thought. Its influence would be strongest on the Shī'ah in general, with the exception of the Zaydīyah, and on the extremist *ghulāt* movements, in particular, and it would achieve political backing with the rise of the Isma'īlī Fāṭimid state and find one of its most classical literary expressions in the *Rasā'il (Epistles)* of the so-called Ikhwān al-Ṣafā (Brethren of Purity). Despite this, al-Jabri argues that the 'resigned reason' attendant to this doctrine and reflective of its Hermetic origins (imbued with alchemy and astrology) and its various manifestations would find resonance even with the great scientific minds of the Arab-Islamic world including the legendary Jābir bin Ḥayān [Latin: Geber] (d. 815CE) who authored the first major treatise on optics and the physician Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925CE) author of the monumental encyclopedia *al-Ḥāwī (Contiens Liber)* who was the first to make a clinical diagnosis of measles and small pox in his treatise *al-Judārī wa al-Ḥaṣbah*, translated editions of which were widely consulted in Europe and still being published in Paris in the mid-eighteenth century. (Editor's Note)

2. We are pointing to the definition of Michel Foucault in this context. However, we did not follow him exactly, as those who are acquainted with the works of this prominent French intellectual will observe; we rather, solicited his concepts and orientations from the nature of his own point of view of the topic: Arab culture.

3. This definition belongs to E. Herriot, a French politician and historian who died in 1957.

4. For purposes of clarification, what the author is suggesting here, on the basis of his use of the definition of 'culture' as supplied by E. Herriot, is that there is something which is constant after all else which is 'superfluous' has been forgotten or taken out of consideration. This set of 'constants' is 'culture' and furthermore, it belongs to a particular 'time'. If these 'constants' are not transcended – at which point the set of elements is no longer constant, then the essential 'time' will remain the same. That is, according to al-Jabri, the long list of prominent thinkers whom he mentions are all intelligible to the 'Arab reason' for the fact that they belong to this 'culture' and a 'cultural time' which has not changed – as the author states, the 'curtain has never been drawn on the stage' – not once. Al-Jabri does not argue that 'new' elements have not been introduced, but rather that the old have persisted and it is this situation which renders the 'culture' constant with a particular 'cultural time' – that is, distinct from historical, chronological time which attaches to political, social or other events (Editor's note).

5. J. Piaget, *Problème de psychologie génétique*, p. 8, Deuvêl Gonthier, 1972.

6. Obviously, 'cognitive unconscious' as we often use here is different from 'collective unconscious' as used by Carl Jung.

7. As some Orientalists and their followers did, see for example chapter three of *Fajr al-Islām* by Aḥmad Amīn, entitled 'Ṭabī'at al-'Aqlīyah al-'Arabīyah'.

8. *al-Ḥalaqah al-Mafqūdah fī Tārīkh al-'Arab* by Muḥammad Jamīl Bayham, published in Cairo by Muṣṭafā al-Ḥalabī in 1950, 'addresses news in the Mashreq and Maghreb of the Arab world in political, economic and social aspects after the fall of Baghdad and up until the end of World War I' (from the cover of the book). If we recall that the fall of Baghdad was in 1258 CE as the author himself stated, then '*al-ḥalaqah al-mafqūdah*' – 'the missing link' – will extend for six-and-a-half centuries which is half of the Hijri calendar, the history of Islam and the Arab *ummah*. Let's hence imagine in this context how the historical consciousness and cultural time would look like for a nation half of its history is missing on the level of its people's consciousness.

9. The *mu'allaqāt al-ka'bah* refers to the pre-Islamic Bedouin tradition of 'attaching' the best of Arab poetry to the *ka'bah* in Mecca which often occurred during contests that accompanied the annual trade fair known as the *sūq 'uqāz*. (Editor's note)

10. Bouhdiba, Abdelwahab. *Culture et Société* (Tunis: L'université de Tunis, 1978), p. 206.

11. The title of a book by Yūsuf al-Ḥūrānī, published by Dār al-Nahār, Beirut 1978.

CHAPTER 3

The Era of Codification: The Authoritative Referential Framework of Arab Thought

Arab Perception and the Pre-Islamic Era

Although we have not yet decided, according to clear and explicit means, on basic issues concerning our research, we have been discussing them as if we have determined them with finality. Undoubtedly, this ‘shortcoming’ will accompany us all to the end, as it is a linguistic ‘flaw’, as language can only express ideas through time, namely *sequentially*. It is then our duty to seek a justification for those speaking to their audience using such an expression: ‘the pen does not serve me best in expressing my innermost feelings’. And this is due to the fact that the ‘innermost feelings’ of such type seek to burst forth all at once, while language imposes by its nature compliance with a kind of system and order.

Fortunately, we are not here in a situation with ideas of such a sort, which are often sustained through emotion, but we are facing ideas that naturally accept order and systemisation as they are ‘rational’, or constitute reason itself. And sometimes, we are obliged to delay what ‘ought to’ be presented first and to present first what ‘ought to’ be delayed, in order to be able to speak. For instance, we have discussed the problem of progress in Arab thought and we mentioned Arab cultural eras, particularly the pre-Islamic era of the Jāhiliyah, as if we have precisely delimited their identity or as if we have settled decisively on the question of the beginning, the beginning of the formation of the structure of Arab reason. Despite the fact that the course of events from a historical point of view

may require, in the view of some, beginning the enquiry from the pre-Islamic era of the Jāhilīyah, seeing that the structure of Arab reason, as we have previously determined, was indeed formed during this era, or at least had begun to be established within it. Yet, this is not correct from our point of view. Actually, *cultural* time, as we have previously explained, is a peculiar time, and is not subject to the concepts of the ‘initial/previous’ and ‘later’ as they correlate to natural sociological time.

Thus, let us consider how matters ought to be ordered in our consciousness, and begin with the examination of the image of the pre-Islamic era in it.

The Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula have a specific culture and a particular structure of reason, and, belonging to this culture, cannot be questioned unless it is possible to question their material physical existence itself. As for the idea that the image we have today of the pre-Islamic era of the Jāhilīyah – as a cultural time and a particular structure of reason – is a replica of the cultural and intellectual reality lived by the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula before Islam, this is an issue to be discussed and questioned.

We do not wish to raise anew here the issue previously discussed by Ṭāhāh Ḥusayn, that is, the question of the validity or invalidity of pre-Islamic literature and consequently the cultural heritage attributed to Arabs before Islam. Uncertainty in such matters should be limited to certain constraints, or else it will forfeit every methodological justification. This is because the situation dictates that it is possible that those who composed poetry could have done so and at the same time ascribed it to those who preceded them, but it is unlikely that these would have been also attributed to personalities of the past who did not actually exist. Put differently, in order for poetry to be attributed to pre-Islamic poets, there must in fact be not only ‘poets of the Jāhilīyah’, but *also* pre-Islamic poetry woven on the same loom. It is a matter of fact that forgery is impossible without a preceding model. As for the matter that pre-Islamic literature of the Jāhilīyah was subject variously to being posited (*ex post facto*), to disjuncture and to exposition as well as being forgotten, and so on, this is unquestionable but actually does not concern us much in regard to our subject. We will not discuss here the facts of the pre-Islamic Jāhilīyah era, but we intend to clarify the common image we have of it, that which is conveyed to us by various kinds of books on cultural heritage.

The reality of the matter is that books on cultural heritage, as well as ‘modern’ studies of culture, evoke not only one but *two* images of the pre-Islamic Jāhilīyah era.

On the one hand, there is an image that appears to be directed towards justifying the description of this (pre-Islamic) era as the *Jāhilīyah* – as *ignorant – jāhilī*. And, the term ‘pre-Islamic’ is an Islamic idiomatic expression that connotes not only ignorance, in the sense of the absence and lack of knowledge, but also, and perhaps *primarily*, what accompanies ignorance and what is produced by it. What I imply is the chaos and the lack of collective social sense, whether in regard to the political (the state) or the moral (religion). It is from here that the correlation of the *Jāhilīyah* with darkness and Islam with light comes. Thus, darkness or layers of darkness here connote chaos and strife and the absence of future prospects, just as it connotes ignorance and lack of responsibility, whereas light implies lucidity in relationships and responsibilities as well as clarity of prospects on the horizon. Furthermore, order takes the place of chaos and security the place of strife. So the question is, did Islam indeed effect this radical transformation in the life of the Arab of the *Jāhilīyah*?

There is no doubt that the status of Arabs after Islam was different from their situation before it. Is there any deeper and more comprehensive transformation than that from a closed tribal society, one without state or law, to a well-organised, universal and open society, governed by a state possessing all the component factors of statehood, including written laws? Nonetheless, nothing prevents us from raising this methodological question pertaining to the field of our research: did Islam achieve a total epistemological rupture from the era of the *Jāhilīyah*? The importance of this question to our subject matter is due not to its content but to its *functionality*. We shall see later that this question is entirely justifiable from this perspective.

There is, on the other hand, an image of the era of the *Jāhilīyah* different from the one whose characteristics we emphasised: an image consisting of a vigorous intellectual life and markets for ideas of culture, as well as the capacity for debate, discussion, and argument, particularly reflected in what Sheikh Muṣṭafā Abd al-Razzāq called ‘religious debate’,¹ which was indeed a kind of ‘dialectical theology’ (*kalām*) antedating the emergence of ‘scholastic dialectical theology’ (*‘ilm al-kalām*) within Arab-Islamic culture. Not only this but the Qur’ān, and this is a point on which Muslims from past times until today would all concur, would not have addressed Arabs through the forms of those enchanting explications of the *bayān*, those exalted meanings and the many ‘rational’ arguments which it employs if it were the case that they were unable to deal with or comprehend it. Moreover, one cannot but notice that if Arabs had not been at an advanced cultural level, they would not have described the Qur’ān as ‘effective magic’,

of the same sort of magic as poetry and the rhymed prose of the *kuhbān* (soothsayers), as well as other objections recorded and rebutted by the Qurʾān.

We are then confronted with two contrasting images of the era of the Jāhilīyah, provided by books on cultural heritage, mostly based on indications mentioned in the Qurʾān in one form or another. Although both images might be accepted simultaneously, seeing that one of them reflects the life of the Bedouin and the other reflects the life of the urban civilisation, or that they both represent two of the phenomena prevalent throughout that entire era, it is essential to notice that the conception of the Jāhilīyah era in Arab consciousness was not always born of historical givens only, nor do we think it is so today. Yet it was, and still is, subject to the dictates of the *present* – *our* present or the present of those who preceded us. More accurately, we might say it is subject to the demands of both ‘presents’, in as much as it is an image transmitted by successors from predecessor ancestors, where each has drawn from the era of the Jāhilīyah what ‘they desired’, where it is a certainty that what has been desired is not the same.

Therefore, we should ask how and *when* did Arab consciousness begin to produce an image or images, of what we call the era of the Jāhilīyah?

Here we need not overburden the reader with ‘historical’ facts circulated abundantly now and previously. In fact, Islam was, especially after the *Hijra* (i.e., the migration in 622 CE), expressing the transcendence of a situation that no longer existed, not because its term had expired, but because it was no longer *desired*, nor sought to be remembered; the great conquests achieved by Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula during the era of the first four caliphs made them feel, and convinced them day after day, that they had escaped from ‘the darkness into the light’ in every domain and at all levels. We might not be exaggerating if we were to say that Arabs were, under the rule of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar at least, making war on the image of the era of the Jāhilīyah in their consciousness with utmost violence and through all the various known mechanisms of suppression. For them, the Jāhilīyah represented ‘pre-history’, their own history. It is no coincidence that ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb chose the day of the migration of the Prophet to Medina as the beginning of Arab history, even of every ‘history’.

However, this total rejection of the era of the Jāhilīyah was not to last for long. The administrative requirements of the new state and new system followed in distributing booty along with what resulted from all this or accompanied it, such as the need to ‘regulate’ flow, and subsequently the

developments occurring at the end of the caliphate of ʿUthmān and during the caliphate of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah all conspired to make Arabs change their view of the past, of their ‘pre-history’. Consequently, the process of reviving the past began, and the suppressed ‘(pre-Islamic) zeal for the Jāhiliyah’ found breathing space and regained full freedom. The result was the *reconstruction* of the ‘past of the Jāhiliyah’ in a way to comply with the requirements of the ‘Islamic present’. Since the road to the past is memory, then nothing prevents it, that is *memory*, from selecting, reducing and resorting to imagination, especially given that life in the past of the Jāhiliyah was closed in upon itself, which implies that it is impossible to challenge what is transmitted except through a life similar to it: the tribal group solidarity (*al-ʿaṣabīyah al-qabalīyah*) that appeared was perhaps stronger than it had been in the era of the Jāhiliyah itself. It not only reflected the vestiges of the past, it also expressed the needs of the *present*.

Moreover, the development occurring at the level of the Arab factor would encompass other factors inside the growing Muslim society of increasingly diverse affiliation. During its initiation, the Umayyad state was regarded as a tribal state tyrannising other tribes, and the opposition, at first, was from within the coalition of Arabs rather than from outside of it. Yet, when tribalism emanated from inside this coalition, the opposition began seeking non-Arab clients. Thus, a silent opposition came to existence, the opposition of the (non-Arab) client (*mawālī*) who were on the margins of the Arab circle, and found a breathing space or rather found a sphere of movement and operation. Hence, the idea of the ‘Islamic state’ crystallised, the concept that the state ought to be a state for all ‘Muslims’ and not for Arabs alone, *a fortiori*, for a group of them. As non-Arabs constituted the majority of the new Islamic society and belonged to different peoples, the opposition took on a ‘populist’ form, namely *al-shuʿūbiyah*, that is, the movement of non-Arab Islamic peoples, demanding, if not the democracy of the majority, at least ‘parity’ (*al-musāwāh*) with the Arabs. It is significant that these populists were initially called *ahl al-taswīyah* (the people of equity or ‘setting things right’), that is, those who demand equality.

As is well known, the Shīʿah rode the wave of this movement, or at least persisted within it under the banner of Shīʿism, and ultimately transformed into an increasingly more expansive and deeply rooted political and religious movement, which enabled it to play a decisive role in overthrowing the Umayyad state and establishing ʿAbbāsīd rule. Since the Arab element again assumed command over the new state – and how could it have been otherwise during that period? – and since the political and

military opposition had exhausted its power during the revolt against the Umayyads, what remained of it was liquidated in the early 'Abbāsīd state. It was thus that the populist movement would then take the form of a clash of culture, trying to hide its political and social class content in the same mould of that the content of the conflict that had taken place among the Arab elements during the establishment of the Umayyad state had been cast. Hence, instead of discourse about the issues of the present and co-opting these in the race towards the future, the *shu'ūbīyah* movement oriented towards the Arab past and criticising it as an ideology, a culture and a civilisation. It was normal that the reaction of the Arabs was one of defence: defending the past of the Arabs and the Jāhīlīyah era in particular, where it now took on not only the form of the defence of national identity (*al-huwīyah al-qawmīyah*), but also defending the means of existence and existence itself.

Thus, the reconstruction of the past of the Arabs, particularly the Jāhīlīyah era, became an urgent necessity and a matter of destiny. This was inevitable when the past was not attacked for its own sake, but for the sake of the present and the future. The 'Abbāsīd caliphs realised this fact, acted accordingly and were inspired by it: the comprehensive cultural structure had come to pose itself as a historical necessity.

The process of the reconstruction of the Arab past – both the Jāhīlīyah and Islamic eras – was not the work of individuals alone, but one of the founding objectives undertaken by the state. It was a political process in essence: the councils of debates and discussions, whether in the palaces of caliphs and princes or in mosques and privy councils, were not councils for entertainment purposes, 'pleasure' and 'socialising', even if they appeared to be so. They were, in fact, a continuous and repetitive 'rewriting' of history, particularly the 'history' of the Jāhīlīyah and early Islamic eras. It is national history, drawn from elements culled from the memories of the fathers and the imagination of the children. We do not consider this an innovation since nations usually construct their national history under the pressure of need and the exigencies of circumstance.

The fact that the two tropes of the Jāhīlīyah era embedded in the Arab consciousness, both today and in the past, do not reflect the reality of this era alone, but perhaps reflect to a greater extent the circumstances in which the contours of these images were drawn, presents the conditions of the Islamic state during the epoch of codification. This is because what we know and what was known by our forefathers about the Jāhīlīyah and the dawn of Islam is primarily due to this comprehensive process of cultural construction that took place during the Era of Codification.

What concerns us in this brief overview of the circumstances under which the Jāhilīyah era was constructed at the level of Arab consciousness is not the trope or images provided by this process, but rather *the process of construction itself*, a process which is undoubtedly a *historical* one. More precisely, the issue that interests us in this process of construction is not that of the materials of construction, that is, the historical givens, but rather the technique of construction and the act of constructing itself. Whether this is related to the tribes vying for glory during the Umayyad era or repelling the attacks of the *shu‘ūbiyah* during the ‘Abbāsīd era, or scientific theories, social entertainment or whatever correct or incorrect historical writings as were known during both eras, what was really influencing the construction was *Arab reason* and not the Jāhilīyah era or the Arab past. This is not only due to the fact that the process of construction was oriented mainly towards the cultural aspect (language, poetry and so on), but also to the fact that this process of construction began to embed in Arab reason ways of work, production, methods of persuasion, and criteria for acceptance and rejection. It was *Arab discourse* that was taking shape, a discourse which in its contemporary philosophical terminology meant a systematic organised discourse about things through remaining silent about certain things and according prominence to others, or in other words: inferring things through certain things while omitting much about others.

Indeed, the structure of Arab reason was formed, then, in conjunction with the era of the Jāhilīyah, but not that (historical) Jāhilīyah as lived by the Arabs before the mission of Muḥammad, but rather the era of the Jāhilīyah as lived in the *consciousness* of the Arabs *after* this mission: the Jāhilīyah era as a *cultural* time that was recovered, rearranged and reorganised during the Era of Codification, which imposes itself historically as referential framework for whatever is before and after it.

So, it is this referential framework to which we must direct our attention.

Al-Dhahabī’s Account of the Era of Codification

When an astronaut is floating in outer space, his ship represents for him what we may term the referential framework – or the referential order – through which and by which he observes things. Thus, the planets, stars, and other spaceships can be, for him, close or far, ‘beneath’ him or ‘above’

him, faster or slower when compared to the position of his ship and its speed. In general, everything for him in the world is determined through illusionary threads connected to his ship, exactly as is the case with a chandelier suspended in the middle of a room with illusionary rays extending to the wall representing the length of the room, the wall representing its width, and the ceiling representing the distance that separates it from the floor: the elevation or third dimension.

In fact, all human beings are the like of such an astronaut; each of us has his own referential framework, determining his relation to the world. Thus, we do not know or recognise anything except through our linking it to a certain type of framework. And human reason, as mentioned in the first chapter, is a series of elements (concepts, perceptions, processes) constituting the basics that determine our relation to things: our comprehension of them, our reaction to them, our subjectivity towards them, and so forth. If people comprehend and communicate with one another, it is because they live similar lives, in nature and in society, providing them with a uniform set of standards and criteria, namely a single referential framework.

However, the experiences of people and their living conditions are not the same, resulting in cultural differences and therefore different orders of reference being adopted by them. This is because culture is similar to a vessel that contains elements forming the order of reference for those who belong to it, just as a spacecraft relies on coordinates to determine the relative nearness of things to it. Similarly, an astronaut relies on his reckoning, whether he is assessing things of the world outside or inside the spaceship, according to the same reference points, or let us suppose that this is what he does. So such is the case for everyone living in a culture. Therefore, it is possible to view culture, any culture, as an independent entity, organised and *organising* (or ordering) the world around it accordingly, by a particular system of reference, namely a whole set of concepts, intellectual instruments, revelatory visions and aesthetic and moral values formed throughout a period or periods – or *being* formed continuously – of the history of that culture, concepts, instruments and visions, and values pulled as if by threads of steel towards it from the world of this culture initially, and the world or worlds arrayed around it secondarily, where the ‘history’ of this culture, or its time, becomes captive to these tethers. As long as these threads remain as they are, essentially unchanged in their composition and the way they function, then time – the time of a particular culture – remains extended, moving silently as if it were a carpet suspended, through the threads forming it, where everything subjected to

it is pulled to its edge, namely towards the end where the process of weaving began on the day when it was woven.

The Era of Codification, for Arab culture, is tantamount to this 'edge', the foundation. It is the referential framework attracting to it, with threads of steel, all the branches of this culture, and regulating its subsequent various patterns (or models) up until today. Moreover, this epoch of codification, as we have outlined in the preceding paragraph, is at the same time the referential framework that determines what comes *before* it (at the level of Arab consciousness, of course). Thus, images of the pre-Islamic Jāhiliyah era, early Islam, and most of the Umayyad era, are woven with threads emanating from the Era of Codification, and are the same threads that wove the images of the post-codification era. Therefore, Arab reason is in fact nothing other than these particular threads, which extended to what was before it and produced its image in the Arab consciousness, and extended, and still do, to what comes after, to fashion the general cultural, ideational reality in the general Arab culture, and this is one of its essential manifestations. Let us then examine the circumstances of this era and its achievements. In his *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'* (*History of the Caliphs*) al-Suyūṭī relates a pivotal report of Al-Dhahabī:

'Al-Dhahabī asserts: in the year (one hundred) and forty-three, the *ulamā* of Islam began codifying the *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and exegesis (*tafsīr*) in this era. Thus, Ibn Jarīḥ in Mecca, and Mālik al-Mawṭa' in the Medina, and Awzā'ī in Damascus, and Ibn Abī 'Arūbah and Ḥammād bin Salamah and others in Basra, and Mu'ammār in Yemen, and Sufyān al-Thawrī in Kūfah, all engaged in classification and categorisation. And Ibn Ishāq al-Maghāzī and Abū Ḥanīfah (God have mercy on his soul) classified jurisprudence and opinion. Thereafter, Yasīr, Hushaym and Layth and Ibn Luhay'ah, and then Ibn al-Mubārak and Abū Yūsuf and Ibn Wahab. The process of recording in writing (putting on record) as well as that of codification (categorisation) proliferated. Arabic books, books on language, history, and chronologies known as *ayām al-nās* (lit., *The Days of People*) were all recorded. Prior to this era, people used to speak of what they had learned by heart, or transmit knowledge from genuine but disorganised pages (*ṣulḥuf*).²²

We are confronted with a very important text for our subject matter, and we seek in the current stage of our research to emphasise the following facts through it:

This text determines the year AH 143 as the date of the beginning of codification in Islam; this date might be acceptable, if we add or deduct a few years, if we understand that codification is that extensive process occurring under the supervision of the state, starting from the era of the

‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Manṣūr, who was appointed to rule as caliph between AH 136 and 158, which stamped Arab social and intellectual life with its own imprint for a period spanning nearly a century or more, and became its hallmark. Hence, this epoch was designated: the Era of Codification. However, if we understand codification strictly as delimiting, recording, and editing of some issues in the form of specialised memoranda, it will be necessary to return all the way back to the time of the Prophet and the first four caliphs. And there is a major difference between the work of an individual and a general, collective work that relates to the whole *ummah*, its past, present and future.

Also, Al-Dhahabī’s account in al-Suyūṭī’s history determines the places or garrison metropolises (*amṣār*)³ from within which the process of codification was launched. These are Mecca, Medina, al-Shām (Damascus), Basra, Kūfah and Yemen,⁴ and these were garrisons which were gathering points and centres of learning, attracting men who were carriers in their texts and their ‘hearts’ of Islamic heritage, which was beginning to expand and diversify. This heritage consists of a mixture of information, texts, interpretations and explanations, which are not categorised, classified, nor edited. And the process of codification aimed mainly at screening this ‘incoherent heap’ of knowledge and codifying it, applying its categorisation to *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr* (exegesis), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), language and history.

The text has not neglected to mention the way knowledge and science were practised before this era. It explains that people used to speak by way of memorising or transmitting knowledge from genuine but disorganised pages’, namely through ‘records’ which are not based on any standard of measurements usually employed in writing books such as subject unity and integrity and subdivision of matters into chapters and so on.

This information is very useful for the historian of Arab-Islamic sciences since it determines the date of the inception of its establishment and the primary centres of learning, which were the stage for this process of foundation, and the materials that were the subject of these sciences. However, the epistemological researcher who undoubtedly benefits from these facts, will direct his attention to what is more important for him, that is, to the term ‘codification of knowledge/science (*tadwīn al-‘ilm*) and its categorisation (*tabwīb*)’ mentioned in the text. Therefore, we will cast some light on the significance of this term.

‘The codification of knowledge and its categorisation’ is not the same as the production of knowledge. The codification of knowledge means: knowledge is ready, and the task of the codifier, namely, the scholar, is restricted or almost so to collecting, compiling, and categorising it. Although

the term ‘knowledge’ (*al-‘ilm*) at that time was meant to refer to the ‘*ḥadīth*’ and what is related to among exegesis and *fiqh*, its content also referred to ‘auxiliary knowledges/sciences’, to this primary knowledge, such as linguistics, *al-maghāzī* ([accounts of] raids/battles) and *ayām al-nās*. In other words, knowledge was utilised in opposition to ‘opinion’, so it is transmitted accounts (*marwiyāt*) of *ḥadīth*, exegesis and other religious knowledge. Therefore, from this standpoint, ‘codification’ was coupled with ‘categorisation’ in regard to the term at hand – that is, *al-‘ilm*. This matter is, essentially, related to the collection of the Arab-Islamic intellectual heritage, and its classification into branches, each forming an ‘art’ among the arts of science and knowledge, independently or almost independently.

However, ‘the codification of knowledge and its categorisation’, even in the sense of just collecting and classifying, cannot be accomplished without ‘opinion’, because it is essential to select, delete, ‘correct’, prepose and postpose: these are procedures certainly emanating from ‘opinion’. Therefore, the process was not restricted to ‘preserving’ the Arab-Islamic cultural heritage from loss (to which the term ‘codification’ (*tadwīn*) apparently refers), neither was it restricted to categorising (*taṣnīf*) this heritage so as to facilitate its circulation, as is intended by the term ‘classifying’ (*tabwīb*).⁵ But the process was in fact one of restructuring this cultural heritage in a way to render it a ‘cultural heritage’ (*turāth*): namely a referential framework for the Arab view of things, of the universe and mankind, society and history.

In order not to prolong the issue that has now become clear, and in order not to plunge our research into details that are very well known today, even if these are more interesting aspects for historians of Arab-Islamic sciences than they are for epistemologists, we will proceed to analyse another piece of evidence carrying a particular significance for our theme the ‘*ulamā*’ of *ḥadīth* summarise the epistemological principle on which their methodology is founded, consequently the science of *ḥadīth* itself, in this sense: ‘when we assert that a *ḥadīth* is correct, that does not mean it is absolutely correct, but it means it is correct according to our conditions. Similarly, when we assert that a *ḥadīth* is incorrect, that does not connote decisiveness in its incorrectness, as it might be correct in fact, but it does not comply with our conditions, and Allāh knows best.’⁵ If we add to the above that what is true for *ḥadīth* is also true for *tafsīr* (exegesis), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), language and ‘history’, because those who worked in ‘codification and categorisation’ in these disciplines adopted the methodology of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, which depends on narration and the *isnād*

(chains of transmitters) and attendant criticism. In sum, we could say that Arab-Islamic cultural heritage transmitted through all generations from the Era of Codification to this day is not ‘absolutely’ true, but is correct only ‘according to the conditions’ of the *ahl al-‘ilm* (people of knowledge), these terms which were posited by and submitted to by relators of *ḥadīth*, *fuqahā*’, exegetes, syntacticians and linguists, who lived during the Era of Codification, between the middle of the second century and the middle of the third century of the Hijrah.

When we approached the issue this way, we never intended to put our Arab-Islamic culture in question. No, we have defined our position in regard to doubting cultural heritage (*al-turāth*) or a part of it in the preceding paragraph. Our intention here is to emphasise that these ‘conditions’ were not part of ‘knowledge’, that is, transmitted accounts, but were rather the product of ‘opinion’, namely *reason*, or rather its primary product. Therefore, these conditions – the conditions of correctness considered during the Era of Codification in *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence, language and syntax – form the earliest manifestations of Arab reason, the first appearance of creativity and innovation within this reason. They are the ‘constituting reason’ in Arab-Islamic culture, Arab reason in its most prominent manifestation and strongest constituent parts. And since such conditions are still utilised to this day, within Arab culture, at least as essential points of reference, they have constituted the referential framework for Arab thought since the Era of Codification up to this day, or at least the main and essential part of this framework.

Consequently, the question we raised at the beginning of Chapter One in this book is the following: ‘Should we study Arab reason as it was yesterday or Arab reason as it is today?’ This question could be reiterated differently and in a fashion more related to concepts of contemporary thought as: ‘Has Arab reason effected an epistemological rupture with itself, that is, with the “conditions” which appeared in it for the first time, which were the ones that were posited and employed by those who codified and categorised knowledge for the first time in Arab history?’

Certainly, the answer to this question requires, first and foremost, knowledge of these conditions in order to be able to compare the situation as it is now and as it was then, and to consider whether the difference between them is tantamount to a ‘rupture’ or not. In order to comprehend these conditions it must be mentioned that we do not mean those conditions that were stipulated by the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, the lexicologists, and the pioneers of syntax. Nor do we mean those conditions that were derived later from their technique of work, such as criticism of ‘narrators’ (commendation

and censure) and the ranking of a given ‘narrator’ on a scale of correctness. (i.e., criticising transmitters of tradition on the basis of their purported biographic details, and thus indirectly evaluating the veracity of the content which they transmitted). No, there are other conditions of veracity which underlie these that are declared but not explicitly disclosed, not because our forefathers intended to be parsimonious with those who came after them, but because these belonged to their cognitive unconsciousness so they acted accordingly; however, they were not fully aware of what they were doing.

As long as we proceed here within the context of primary approaches, we will highlight the ‘extrinsic’ determiners of these conditions before we become immersed in their inner composition, components, nature and mechanisms, which will cover entire chapters of this book in its two parts.

* * *

One of the benefits of modern methodology in reading texts is that it teaches us not only to pay attention to what the text states and how it states it, but also to draw our attention to that which it is ‘silent’ about, and the means by which it is silent. In the text, from al-Suyūṭī’s history, al-Dhahabī discusses codification of the *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, language, history and *ayām al-nās*, and discussed these categories of Arab-Islamic scholarship in the name of ‘knowledge (*‘ilm*)’, which meant, as noted, narrations or transmitted accounts, as opposed to ‘opinion’, which connoted relying on reason. Thus, the text was silent about other aspects of the scientific movement witnessed during the Era of Codification from around the year AH 143 and afterwards. The text kept silent about it not because it did not fall within the scope of ‘knowledge’, when there was a ‘scientific’ movement in the same sense which the text did not mention, but because those hidden aspects were not included in the writer’s scope of interest nor in his domain of knowledge. And undoubtedly, underlying and hidden ideological motives had their role in this omission.

So let us consider these silent, unmentioned aspects in the aforementioned text which are no less important, not because they complete the text and fill in its gaps, as the historian of science might rightfully assume, but also because it consists of, in the view of epistemological analysis, a part of the objective conditions that framed the epistemological and ideological presuppositions underlying the position of the writer of the text.

The text has remained silent about ‘codification and classification of

knowledge' by the Shī'ah. When we know that Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the Sixth Shī'ite Imam, died in the year AH 148, and that in his time *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence, and exegesis were codified from the viewpoint of the Shī'ites, in other words, it was during his time and under his supervision that Shī'ite knowledge was systematised and its fundamental issues formulated in the form of theory. If we know this, we will realise the serious effect of this silence on subsequent generations. That is, a fundamental aspect of the history of Arab-Islamic knowledge disappears from the Sunni purview, which has remained the official perspective in most Arab countries. And, when we know that historicising of the 'codification and classification of knowledge' among the Shī'ah was also silent about Sunni 'knowledge', we will realise that the process of framing – in the sense of confinement – was mutual: silence about Shī'ite 'knowledge' was one of the 'objective conditions' which determined and framed the conditions of correctness for Sunni 'knowledge', and vice versa.

In order to clarify this remark, we would point to the phenomenon of 'the race for precedence' in the Sunni–Shī'ite controversy concerning the validity of their respective orders of knowledge. Thus, in order for the Sunni 'knowledge' to acquire greater credibility than that of its Shī'ite competitor, the Shī'ite knowledge that was codified during the rule of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, some Sunnis have projected the codification of *ḥadīth* backwards to the time of 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Azīz, who reigned as caliph between the years AH 99 and 101. In this regard, accounts have been reported that 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Azīz wrote to the people of the far regions saying: 'Observe the *ḥadīth* of the Messenger of Allāh and collect it.'⁶ To respond to this claim, the Shī'ah projected the date of codification of the *ḥadīth* prior to the reign of 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Azīz, and even as far as to the period of the Prophet.

Al-sayyid Ḥasan al-Ṣadr, one of the senior Shī'ite *'ulamā'*, who died in the year AH 1354, after discussing the positions of Sunnis on the codification of the *ḥadīth*, replied and asserted: 'and if you acknowledge that, then you should know that the Shī'ah were the first to collect the vestiges of tradition (*āthār*) and reports from the era of the caliphs of the chosen Prophet, May Allāh bless and grant him and them peace, so they followed their Imam ('Alī) Commander of the Faithful'. Then, he indicated that Salmān al-Fārisī was 'the first to classify traces of vestiges and that al-Ghifārī was 'the first to classify the *ḥadīth* and vestiges of tradition after the founders', and that Ibn Abī Rāfi', who died at the beginning of 'Alī's caliphate, namely around the year AH 35, had written a book entitled *al-Sunnan wa al-Aḥkām wa al-Qaḍāyā* (*Sunnan, Legal Ruling and Issues*)

and that Abū Rāfiʿ, who was affiliated (*mawlā*) to the Prophet, is the oldest ‘to have written [on the subject] necessarily’.⁷

Thus, the silence of al-Dhahabī, author of the text at hand, about the ‘codification and categorisation of knowledge’ among the Shīʿah was not the result of oversight or personal motives but constitutes, in fact, a silence of the referential authority, the epistemological and the ideological, to which the author refers and belongs – the authority which determines the field of ideological knowledge for all Sunnis. And the same applies to Shīʿites’ silence about the ‘codification and classification of knowledge’ for the Sunnis.

In any case, this Sunni–Shīʿite competition is over precedence in codification, as we have previously determined it, that is, the whole process of constructing and restructuring of Arab-Islamic culture was concluded during what was termed the ‘Era of Codification’, that is the period stretching between the middle of the second century of Hijra to the middle of the third century.

Therefore, the process of codification of the *ḥadīth* and what is associated with it, such as ‘biographies (of the Prophet – *sīrah*)’ and narrative accounts as well as the codification of language and the determination of its grammar, all took place at one time and in the most important Islamic garrisons of the period. As such, no matter whether we accept the date determined by al-Dhahabī or we modify it somewhat, what is historically proven is that those who were referred to as ‘codifying and classifying knowledge’ did indeed do this, and they were contemporaneous with one another and lived in the garrison cities specified by the text. What we want to emphasise is that this work which was completed in one time and in diverse garrisons (*amṣār*) could not have transpired spontaneously and by coincidence.

The state must have been behind this broad scholastic movement which aimed at making religion ‘official’, if the term is correct (namely making it a part of the state and putting it in its service), just as the work of the Shīʿites in this field aimed at making political opposition ‘official’, that is, bestowing religious legitimacy upon it. Early on, the Shīʿah confronted the state politically and militarily. However, this shifted, at least temporarily, with Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, from direct political action against the state, to religious cultural action for the purpose of preparing a new generation of ‘revolutionaries’.⁸ Therefore, the process of codification, namely this total cultural structuring we are discussing, was established by and as a result of a fierce competition between the two major groups of Islam, a competition to restructure Arab-Islamic traditional heritage in a way which put

the past in the service of the 'present': the present moment of the Sunnis and the Shi'ah, and subsequently the future of both. Needless to say that the competition to reconstruct the Arab-Islamic cultural heritage, whether religious or intellectual, also comprised a more serious and far-reaching process, namely, competition over the formation of Arab reason, the reason that belongs to this legacy of tradition itself. And if many Orientalists have spoken of 'Sunni Islam' and 'Shi'ite Islam', perhaps a distinction in Islamic culture between 'Sunni reason' and 'Shi'ite reason' will be closer to the truth, seeing that this issue is related not only to two creeds but to two different epistemological systems interpreting the same creed. This will be clarified later.

There are other fundamental aspects which are not mentioned in the text in question, neither in other Sunni texts speaking of the 'codification and classification of knowledge', since they did not belong to the locus of 'knowledge', according to their terminology in what they considered knowledge, in the sense of 'narrative accounts'. Among these silent, unmentioned aspects are theology on the one hand, and 'sciences of the ancients' on the other, as it is historically confirmed that codification of the subjects which would form what is called 'theology' had already appeared before the date posited by al-Dhahabī and continued afterwards. It is sufficient here to refer to the multiple 'writings' that were cited by historians of sects and genealogies by Wāṣil bin 'Aṭā', who died in AH 131, and these writings, which the latter indicated they were acquainted with, prove its actual existence.⁹ On the other hand, there is consensus among some historians of ancient sciences that their translation began with Khālīd bin Yazīd bin Mu'āwiyah bin Abī Sufyān, who died in AH 85. This Umayyad prince – who lost his right to succession – had summoned a group of Greeks who were in Alexandria, which was famous for its school of science. It has been said that he travelled there himself and asked them to translate some Greek and Coptic books into Arabic, especially alchemical works that explain how to transform base metals into gold and silver. Perhaps the chemistry of Jābir bin Ḥayyān, who became a disciple of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq himself, is the extension of the work launched by Khālīd bin Yazīd, the prince who is cited as having translated books on medicine, such as some of Galen's work. In this regard, 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Azīz is recorded as having circulated a book on medicine, which was translated from Syriac into Arabic during the rule of Marwān bin al-Ḥakam.¹⁰

We should note here another manifestation of 'codification' in the Arabic language, that is, the 'Arabisation of registers', or government records and books, in other words the Arabisation of administration. This is because

administrative affairs within the Arab-Islamic state were at first in the hands of ‘foreign functionary-technicians’, such as Romans or Persians, and the official language of the administration – particularly the language of documents – was Persian in Iraq, and Greek in Syria and Egypt. The launching of the Arabisation of administration started at the time of ‘Abd al-Malik bin Marwān (AH 65–86), namely in the same period during which Khālīd bin Yazīd was preoccupied with the translation of chemistry, medicine and astrology. The Arabisation of registers (*diwāns*) was an important historic event, and its impact went beyond the administrative field: on the one hand, this Arabisation was a subjugation of the Arabic language, the language of poetry, rhetoric and proverbs, its enrichment, and even its transformation into a scientific and civilised language. On the other hand, this process of Arabisation was not only an Arabisation of registers, but also the Arabisation of the writers of the registers (*diwāns*), namely the technical framework of ‘non-Arabs’ that facilitated the administration of affairs inside the Arab state. This is because these non-Arab technicians, who were made up of Persians, Greeks and others, were obliged to learn the Arabic language in order to maintain their posts and social status, and undoubtedly they endeavoured to teach their children the ‘official language’ of the state – Arabic – which must have been one of the hidden factors that prompted the collection and writing of grammars for the language. As such, the Arabic language and consequently the Arab-Islamic thought were enriched in the process of Arabisation of registers in two fields: the field of terminology, concepts and technical structures, and the field of framework – organisation bracing. And certainly both sides had a positive and very important effect in preparing the Arabic language and these frameworks, equally, for the Era of Codification, the epoch of the establishment of general culture which reached its peak with ‘House of Wisdom’ (*bayt al-ḥikmah*), created and sponsored by the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs in Baghdad.

Some of the other facets which this text was silent about, and which formed a valuable part in that process of total cultural construction, is the codification in politics. Thus, ‘Abdullah bin al-Muqaffa^ᶜ, who died in the year AH 142, had handled the translation and Arabisation of Persian political literature, namely transferring it into Arab discourse, addressed to the Arab states and its people, in favour of the opposition and its cause. We must also note here that the trend of Ibn al-Muqaffa^ᶜ – a Persian poet whose ‘soundness of Islam’ was questioned by his contemporaries – to compose political literature may not be a coincidence: in addition to his book *al-Adab al-Kabīr* (*The Grand Literature*) full of proverbs and examples that have socio-political significance, there is *Risālat al-Ṣaḥābah* (*The*

Treatise of the Companions) which exemplified a constitutional and political statement that advanced the need to organise the state on a ‘secular’ basis. Whereas his more famous book, *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*, despite its Indian-Persian origin, was translated into Arabic for an obvious political significance, in addition to the chapter added by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, ‘the Barzawīh chapter’, which poses the difference between religions and their conflict, and consequently the need to depend on ‘reason’ alone. In fact, it is noteworthy that the writings of Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ are ‘secular’¹¹ as he cites neither the Qur’ān nor *ḥadīth*, nor any other element of the Islamic heritage. On the contrary, he openly called for the adoption of pre-Islamic ‘ancient heritage’. Here, we must ask a question: is it not that the work of Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ is one of the general strategic manifestations which aimed at founding culture inside the new society, the society of the ‘Abbāsīd state, which is Persian-Arabic, on a cultural heritage (tradition) different from the Arab-Islamic one? Is it not then that the process of ‘codifying and categorising knowledge’ which was discussed by al-Dhahabī in the text at hand, is a kind of reaction against the threat posed by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ and ‘secular’ authors like him?

Whatever the answer to this question, to which we will return in a following chapter, one cannot but assume the background of the socio-political and ideological conflict behind the processes of codification in various forms. This was because this process was considered to be rapid and total, and encompassed a manifest competition over the past, consequently the present and the future, an act which cannot be spontaneous. Nonetheless, what interests us here is not the conflict itself, but what is left of it after having accomplished its direct historical task: what remained are these hidden elements that stamped Arab-Islamic culture and subsequently Arab reason with its own character and which continues to exert its influence within this culture to this day, these elements that constitute ‘the conditions of authenticity’ adopted by each of the conflicting parties and which directed their work and established their conceptions and perceptions. Accordingly, we should direct our attention not to the ideological – political conflict that framed the processes of codification on the outside, but to the epistemological conflict, the conflict of ‘the conditions of authenticity’; in other words, the conflict of the system of knowledge in Arab culture in its relationship to the components of perceptual and ideological Arab reason.

Summary of the Three Previous Chapters: 'Arab Reason' – 'Arab Culture' – 'Era of Codification'

Here, at the end of this section, we will summarise the last three chapters.

'Arab reason', of which we will provide a critical analysis, is not an empty category or a metaphysical concept, nor indeed an ideological slogan, or a laud or an epithet, but rather the totality of concepts and mental performance controlling, in various degrees of strength and rigidity, the Arab individual's perception of things and the way they are handled in the field of acquiring knowledge, the field of producing and reproducing it.

And we mean by 'Arab individual', the human individual whose reason has been formed, unfolded, flourished, developed and was shaped inside Arab culture, and which forms, due to this, his/her principal referential framework, if not the only one.

And 'Arab culture' in being the authoritative referential framework for Arab reason belongs, in our consideration, to a single time since its inception up until today; a static time which the contemporary Arab lives just as his forefathers did in the Middle Ages. He lives it without perceiving any alienation or sense of exile from the past when he interacts conceptually with personalities of this past-literati and thinkers. Rather, to the contrary, he doesn't find himself nor does he sense stability or sound standing except in the context of his immersion in this culture and his exclusive dedication to it.

Arab culture, in this sense, and consequently Arab reason itself, had been formed as an entity, the pillars were stabilised and its boundaries demarcated, and its directions determined during that period in history known as 'the Era of Codification', the period during which images of the pre-Islamic era and early Islam had been delineated in Arab consciousness, and at the same time images of 'foreign' cultures, under the pressure of one need or another, were transferred into the Arabic language, and consequently to the Arab consciousness itself.

It was through these images that the Arab consciousness recovered from the past during the Era of Codification, the past of Arabs and others, where ways of thinking in Arab awareness were consolidated, forming in their interrelation and interaction with concepts of that era, what we call here 'Arab reason'. Therefore, the Era of Codification is the referential framework for Arab reason par excellence and not the pre-Islamic, or early Islamic eras, or even before that. The evidence is that what we know about the epoch antecedent to the Era of Codification was indeed structured in

that same period, and that what followed cannot be understood unless it is linked to it in some way.

Put differently, the Era of Codification is present in the Arab-Islamic past which preceded it, and in any other past perceived from within Arab-Islamic culture; it is also present in several types of 'future' that followed. It is present in all of that, with all its facts, contradictions, ideological contradictions as well as, and this is what concerns us primarily, in all its concepts, perceptions, and the apparatus of knowledge. In other words, the facts and conflicts and contradictions known during the Era of Codification, which formed its historical identity, are responsible for the diversity of ideological fields and systems of knowledge in Arab culture, and also responsible for the diversity of arguments and their controversy in Arab reason.

Finally, if we have seized upon what is required of some of the issues raised throughout these initial definitions, it was because the primary characteristic of these definitions allows for such requisition. However, we believe that the three previous chapters have offered what enables them to not only be justifiable since they are working tools, but also promising a new vision and new perspectives. Therefore, they will always be present with us to enrich research, and at the same time, research will enrich and validate them. The process of determining concepts will remain crucially important and will only conclude with the end of the book.

Arab reason is the underlying structure for Arab culture since its formation during the Era of Codification. This is the abstract conclusion we have reached in this first section of the book, and we still have to prove it and attempt to render it a historical truth, indeed a scientific truth. This is to be attained through 'concrete analysis of concrete reality'. And this is what we will endeavour to achieve shortly, the moment of studying the formation of Arab reason, and the moment of structural analysis of the fundamentals of knowledge in Arab culture, namely the structure of Arab reason itself. The first stage will be the theme of this book, and the second is to be addressed in the forthcoming book.

Notes

1. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Rāziq, *Tamhīd li-Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-Islāmīyah* (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1959), p. 115.

2. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍāh, 1976), p. 416.

3. Numerous modern Arab cities had their beginnings as garrison towns in the

early Islamic conquests known in the plural as *amṣār*, the Arabic name for Egypt – and for Cairo, in particular – Miṣr – reflects this. [Editor.]

4. We may add Egypt and Khurāsān. As for Baghdad, it did not exist by that time, since it was built by ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Manṣūr in only AH 145.

5. Mentioned by ‘A’ishah ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in an article entitled ‘al-Manhaj al-‘Aqlī ‘inda ‘Ulamā’ al-Muslimīn’, *Majallat al-Bāḥith*, 3 (Morocco: Wizārat al-Awqāf al-Maghribīyah, 1974), p. 8. And Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ mentioned this principle in the following version: ‘when they say this is a correct *ḥadīth*, it means that it is related and connected to other mentioned descriptions, and it is not a condition for it to be bound by the same subject, as it could be that the issue is exclusive for some of them and not agreed upon unanimously by the whole nation as true. And if they say that a *ḥadīth* is not correct, this does not mean that it is absolutely erroneous on the same subject, as it could be correct on the same subject but the intended is that it could not be related to the mentioned condition, and God knows’, see: al-Ḥafīẓ al-‘Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa al-Īdāḥ fī Sharḥ Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, reviewed by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ‘Uthmān (Beirut: [n.pb.], 1969), p. 21.

6. See: Muḥammad ‘Ajāj al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth ‘Ulūmuh wa Muṣtalaḥuh* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1975). See also: Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍāh al-‘Arabīyah, 1961), vol. 2, p. 106.

7. Mentioned by Muḥammad ‘Ajāj al-Khaṭīb; see: Muḥammad ‘Ajāj al-Khaṭīb, *ibid.*

8. We will elaborate on the issue in a subsequent chapter.

9. See *al-Fihrist* by Ibn al-Nadīm, Flugel version, p. 251.

10. Jurjī Zaydān, *Tārīkh al-Tamaddun al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1958), vol. 3, p. 153.

11. It must be noted that the ‘secularism’ of Ibn al-Muqaffa^c did not emanate from rational perception . . . but rather a Manichean Gnostic one.

PART TWO

The Formation of Arab Reason

The Epistemological and
Ideological in Arab culture

CHAPTER 4

The Bedouin, the Maker of the Arab World

Many facts could justify according priority to the Arabic language for the study of the components of Arab reason (*ʿaql*). For one, an Arab cherishes his language to the degree of sanctification, and he considers the power it has over him as an expression not only of the power of the language itself, but also of his own. This is because only an Arab is capable of responding to the language and rising to the high standard of rhetorical expression that characterises it, whereas other people are (*al-aʿājim*) ‘non-Arabs’ simply and a ‘non-Arab is one who is not capable of eloquence nor clarity of language’ and among such are (the class of) speechless animals. Hence, it is possible to state that the more an Arab is capable of dealing with the Arabic language, whether in expression or implementation, the more he is capable of possessing what the human, as a human possesses, an Arab is a ‘speaking animal’ (*ḥayawān faṣīḥ*), thus, eloquence and not just ‘reason’ (*ʿaql*) can determine his nature.

We can also justify prioritising the Arabic language by studying the elements of Arab reason (*ʿaql*) from another angle: for the most important contributions Arabs have made to Islamic civilisation, which built on former civilisations, are language and religion. As such, Islam remained Arabic, and cannot dispense with the Arabic language, because the Qurʾān, which is a ‘pellucid Arabic Book’, cannot be translated into another language without distorting it. Therefore, ‘Arabic is part of its identity’,¹ as scholars of the fundamentals of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) state. And we can realise the consequences of this fundamental principle in Islam if we notice

the immense role played by the Arabic language in Islamic studies and researches, both in creed (*al-ʿaqīdah*) and Islamic law (*al-sharīʿah*). Many of the differences between the schools of thought, linguistics and what is related to *fiqh*, are attributable to language, that is, to the abundance of utterances (*alfāz*) in the Arabic language and to the abundance of meanings of these utterances, and the diversity which characterises Arabic structures. Whereas political conflicts were originally provoked by social, economic or sectarian factors, they themselves found support or cover in Arabic religious text, thanks to the compliance and openness of the Arabic language.

There is another consideration that could justify giving priority to the Arabic language in the study of Arab reason (*ʿaql*): its components and mechanisms. It is the structural component itself. In fact, historical facts confirm beyond any doubt that the first scholarly and organised work carried out by Arab reason (*ʿaql*) was the collection of the Arabic language and the compilation of its rules (its grammatical bases). In a situation as such, it is entirely ‘normal’ that the first scientific endeavour, that of producing linguistics and syntax, should be considered a model for other endeavours that were carried out subsequently. Therefore, it is expected, as we will explain below, that the methodology followed by the first scholars of linguistics and syntax, as well as the concepts they utilised and the intellectual mechanisms they employed were ‘originally’ employed by the founders of the Islamic sciences, or at least that they drew from it their method of operation, that is, if they did not actually follow its model. This does not negate, naturally, mutual impact at a later stage. Therefore, the science of religion (theology) becomes a paradigm and a model for linguistics, as we will reveal in due course.

We can add to this what recent studies have emphasised, that language – any language – determines or at least contributes substantially to determining the perspective of the person *vis-à-vis* the world, and his perception of it, either as a whole or in parts. Further, if we notice that the Arabic language is perhaps the only living language in the world that has remained the same in words, syntax and structure for at least fourteen centuries, we will have realised how great the extent of the impact of this language is on Arab reason (*ʿaql*) and its outlook towards things, an outlook which must have been influenced, to a lesser or greater extent, by the perception brought about by the Arabic language since its codification, namely since the Era of Codification itself.

Thus, whether we view the Arabic language as ‘enchanted and rhetor-

ical' or we view the role it has played in Arab-Islamic culture as a whole, or its direct or indirect role in determining the basis of scientific thinking and its tools in this culture, or if we consider the impact it has on the view of its people, the universe and the human being – their *Weltanschauung* – whether we look at the Arabic language from this angle or from another, we will always find ourselves facing a fundamental and perhaps decisive, determinant, of Arab reason (*‘aql*) in its structure and operation. We will consider the way Arab reason (*‘aql*) is delineated through the language to which it belongs and vice versa, and we will begin by highlighting some of the general theoretical facts that will help us pave the way towards our subject.

The Arabic Language in the Eyes of European Scholars

The German thinker Herder (1744–1803) was one of the pioneers of the modern era who endeavoured, through substantial scientific efforts, to regulate and determine the relationship between language and reason. Perhaps he can even be considered the first pioneer of the theory which attributes a key role to language in shaping the human perspective of the universe. Despite the fact that we do not share his ideological and nationalist preoccupations, which subliminally framed his theory of language, we do agree with him that language is not merely an instrument for thought, but also the *pattern* by which it is formulated. And we do not believe that there is anyone who truly would argue that a young child learns how to think through the words provided by the language of the society in which he grows up. And if so, then his world of thought will be limited, and *must* be limited to the possibilities provided by his mother tongue.

From this standpoint, Herder associated the characteristics of a language with the characteristics of the nation which speaks it; he even asserted that every nation speaks as it thinks and thinks as it speaks. Not only this, but also every nation stores in its language its experiences, both correct and invalid elements, which are transferred by language to younger future generations, rendering the mistakes of the past, or at least part of them, a part of tradition transmitted by language throughout generations and which contributes to the determination of the perception of its 'people', the universe, truth, goodness and beauty. Therefore, Herder posits that: 'The rules of human knowledge: truth,

beauty and virtue have become national deities as much as a national language is such.' This means that even abstract, ideal values that a person usually regards as eternal humanistic values, which are not bound by time and space, nonetheless carry with them a *national* trait through *language*. Therefore, we cannot realise truth or perceive beauty or hold fast to virtue except in the same sense and content and form that transmit language – our language – and our virtues. Language, then, is not just a tool or substance, it is somehow the 'mould' into which knowledge is cast accordingly (exactly as the tailor adapts a dress to a certain pattern), it 'draws the boundaries and delineates the environment of every human knowledge'.²

And despite the fact that the assertions made by Herder were for obvious nationalist motives, which are easy to understand if we bear in mind the condition of Germany in the eighteenth century, his remarks are not refuted by recent research and studies dealing with the determination of the relationship between the language of a people and their perception of the world, but rather many linguistic and ethnological studies confirm it. Edward Sapir, a linguistic and ethnological researcher, states that 'the language of a group of people, a group thinking from within that language and speaking it, is the systematiser of its experience, therefore creating its world and its social reality. More precisely, every language contains its particular perception of the world.'³ Adam Schiff summarises the trends of opinion about the relation of language to thought within linguistic studies from the eighteenth century up to the present date, and asserts that 'Beginning with Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt, linguistic studies have adopted several times the thesis that any language system (referring not only to vocabulary, but also to syntax and structure) influences the perspective of its people of the world, and their way of articulating it and accordingly their way of thinking. We think as we speak . . . which means that the language which determines our capability to speak is the same one that determines our capability to think.'⁴

Scholars of linguistics and ethnology report many examples that emphasise these previous views and 'prove' their validity, and they derive their examples mostly from so-called 'primitive' peoples. For instance, the Eskimos (Inuit) have an abundance of words related to snow: its types, transformations, accumulation, and so forth, which means that the Eskimos acquire through their language a broader image of the snow 'world', one which is richer and more precise than that of the people of tropical regions. Undoubtedly, the Arab individual during the pre-Islamic Jāhiliyah era – as well as the inhabitants of desert areas today – had an abundance of

words related to heat: its degrees, types, its transformation in relation to place and time, and so on. Meanwhile, there is not one word available for the Arab – as far as we know – related to the concept of snow except the word ice ‘snow (*al-thalj*)’ itself. And we would not rule out that the Eskimos have one word, or at least some number of words related to heat. The world as proffered by the Inuit language will probably be somewhat lacking in terms pertaining to *heat* when compared with the world as furnished by the Arabic language to its people on the same subject. Likewise, the world proffered by the Arabic language to its people about snow will be lacking in its terms when compared with the world furnished by the Inuit to its people. The creation of a lexicon for these two languages, Arabic-Inuit, dedicated to the world of snow and the world of heat, is quite impossible because these two worlds are unequal in these two languages. It is true that in the end the issue is due to the difference in environmental conditions, the difference between the world of the desert and the icy lands and frozen tundra of North America, and the difference between languages here and there reflects that difference in nature. It is also true that Arabic speakers today and in the past, whether they inhabited hot or temperate areas, remained, and still are, prisoners of the very meagre world that the Arabic language proffers in regard to the world of snow. It is a world no less scanty than that offered by the same language pertaining to the world of aquatic animals compared with, for instance, European languages. Therefore, language not only reflects natural conditions, but also carries with it this same reflection to propagate it in different times and places, and by doing so, becomes a key factor and even sometimes a decisive one in determining and framing the perception of its people of things. And if this is true for all languages including the developed ones, it is because the development of a language is slow by nature; hence, the Arabic language possesses a peculiarity unique to it in this domain. To highlight this specificity and to expose its components is what we will seek to do below.

The Arabic Language and the Determination of Perceptions

In the light of the previous observations, let us take a close look at our current Arabic dictionaries, both old and contemporary (is there a difference between the two categories?), the material of which was gathered – as we will demonstrate soon – during the Era of Codification from the

utterances of Arabs who had remained isolated until that era, and whose language remained unmixed and undisturbed by commingling with the population of urban areas. The dictionary ‘*Lisān al-‘Arab*’ (*The Arab Tongue*), which is the largest and richest dictionary in the Arabic language, does not convey to us, despite the magnitude of its size, the names of natural and industrial things, nor the theoretical concepts and types of terminologies known then, namely the seventh and eighth century AH, and in Cairo, one of the major centres of civilisation in Islamic history. This is because the eighty thousand linguistic subjects included in this voluminous dictionary, which we cherish, do not go beyond the life of that ‘Bedouin’ (*al-a‘rābī*) who was the *hero* of the Era of Codification, that of the ‘rough Bedouin’ life as expressed by Ibn Khaldūn. Many words, new expressions and philosophical and scientific concepts entered the Arabic language from the time of the Era of Codification until the era of Ibn Manẓūr, the author of *Lisān al-‘Arab*. However, the referential framework of Arab reason (*‘aql*) – the Era of Codification – refuses to do more than render the ‘official’ or ‘standard’ Arabic language, the language of dictionaries, and remains always that language which was collected and produced by al-Khalīl and his colleagues. However, the progress that occurred afterwards, or even before that, is considered extraneous to the language of the ‘genuine Bedouins’ and therefore should be disregarded and ignored. Heretofore, and under the influence of this principle, our contemporary dictionaries were produced as mere summaries – sometimes distorted – of the ancient dictionaries. For it to be ‘Arabic’ it should include the language of ‘Arabs’ *exclusively*, the language of those for whom the Era of Codification admitted in the purity of their Arab identity and authenticity.

The Arabic language became static after it was embalmed. However, social life does not become static nor can it be embalmed. It *avenged* itself by imposing colloquial ‘Arabic’ dialects, which were and are still much richer than the classical language. And undoubtedly, it was as such during the Era of Codification itself. And herein lies the serious paradox, even the great *rupture*, experienced by the Arab person until now. This is because, on the one hand, he is provided with a language to use in writing and thinking, the internal mechanism of which is highly valued, yet, on the other hand, which is not capable of providing him with the necessary words to express ideas pertaining to the contemporary world, the world of the twenty-first century in which he lives and which imposes itself on him in this context. And, if the Arab intellectual acquires a system of concepts and terminologies promulgated by our forefathers for their problems, or problems transmitted to them, then he lacks the necessary linguistic

constituent to express the scientific aspect, particularly the industrial and the technological one in our contemporary world, to the degree that if we were to decide not to utter anything but Arabic utterances acknowledged by our dictionaries, he would cease to speak most of the time at home, in the streets and schools. Accordingly, we would have to expunge from our world all civilised matters, the material and the intellectual, which form the basis of the contemporary world.

This is but one manifestation of the problem. Accordingly, the Arab intellectual necessarily speaks the colloquial language which is considerably richer than classical Arabic in the field of civilisational matters, as it borrows from other languages with some ‘broken lingo’ (lit., brokenness) (*taksīr*) that cannot be dealt with intellectually. Despite its civilisational ‘technological’ richness the colloquial language does not proffer the necessary tools and mechanisms requisite for intellectual activity, for it is not a language of culture and thought (*thaqāfah wa fikr*) – hence, its abject poverty despite its apparent richness. The result is that the Arab intellectual, whether a student or a professor, lives in two limited worlds: the world of colloquial language and the world of classical language; whereas the Arab illiterate – forming the majority – is confined to the colloquial and deals with objects *he does not name*, and if he were to do so, he would do so using foreign words with some necessary ‘broken lingo’ which would undoubtedly leave its deep impact on the conceptual framework of his mind, on the structure of his thought. As for the Arab person who knows one or more foreign languages and who lives in three different worlds, he ‘possesses’ three perceptions of ‘them’: he thinks with a foreign language, writes with the classical Arabic language and speaks at home and in the street or even in the university, with the colloquial language.

Let us leave the problematic of multiplicity and duplicity aside, and only consider the way that classical Arabic language – our official mother language – determines our perception (for us Arabs) of the world. Here, we will direct our attention to the linguistic component first; second, to the syntactic and morphological forms; and finally to the styles of rhetoric.

Arabic, a Language of Science

If philosophy was the ‘miracle’ of the Greeks, the Arab sciences are the ‘miracle’ of the Arabs. The truth is that the achievement during the Era

of Codification of the collection of the language and categorising and analysing its grammatical bases, was indeed something of a miracle. After all, is a miracle anything but a 'breach of habit or custom'? And, is there a 'breach of habit or custom' deeper and more eloquent than the speed of transition from a language based on '*al-fiṭrah* (innate disposition)' except through a language that cannot be learned nor understood living among the tribes that speak it, into a language capable of being learned in the same way that knowledge is acquired: via methods of rules, hypotheses and rigorous methodology? Indeed, the codification of the language was much more than just a 'codification' in the sense of recording and categorising: it is the passage of the Arabic language from the level of a non-science to the level of science. It involved the collection of the lexicon of the language, the enumeration of its words, extracting the method of their derivation and their declension, determining and establishing the rules of their syntax, and the invention of diacritical marks to eliminate the ambiguity of its graphic, written form. All of this can be described as nothing less than a new science, as the linguistics of the Arabic language, and even the constitution of a new language which is the classical Arabic language (*al-fuṣḥā*).

Whether we link the process of the collection and foundation of the language to the desire to salvage the language of the Qur'ān from degeneration and digression, and subsequently from dissolution, due to the spread of 'solecism' during the Era of Codification within the new Islamic community where the majority was of non-Arab origins and did not speak Arabic, or whether we link it to the need of Persian writers to learn Arabic to preserve their privileges and keep their offices after the Arabisation of the *dīwān* and its functionaries, as suggested by some contemporary scholars,⁵ the outcome is one, and this is that the process resulted in transitioning the Arabic language from a language that is unscientific (namely which is not disposed to scientific study) to a scientific one – a language governed by the same order as any other scientific subject.

One cannot but admire and appreciate this achievement, especially if taking into account the short period during which it was completed and the tremendous efforts invested voluntarily and without pay by people who dedicated themselves and spent from their own funds for many years to accomplish this laborious task, of which they had not, certainly, sought any gain. They supplied subsequent generations with an exact and precisely codified language, controlled and amenable to reception and learning, and therefore capable of transmitting culture and science from ancestors to successors.

Nevertheless, what is most admirable is the *accuracy* of the methodology followed in that general survey of the Arabs' language, or even of the language of the many tribes – each of which had its own distinct Arabic dialect. And if it is not possible today to determine whether the Arabic language, as perpetuated by the Era of Codification, is the original one among all these dialects, or if this latter was the foundation of the unified, collected language, then the methodology followed in its transformation to a codified language was of such precision and rigorous acuity that it imposed a rigid order, which undoubtedly has impacted on its inner composition, and consequently it must have led to creativity overriding natural disposition and intuition. Further, if we are permitted to call this methodology into question because of its rigidity, which undermined the language and restricted its ability to keep pace with development and renewal, we cannot but be amazed by its precision, the integrity of its pace, and the rigour of its internal logic.

Whether it was al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (AH 100–170) who accomplished his project entirely or one of his pupils (for example, al-Layth a son of Naṣr bin Sayyār) had completed it after him,⁶ or whether al-Khalīl found the principle he adopted in ordering the alphabetical letters in his dictionary (starting from the glottal consonants of the throat to the labial consonants according to the technique of Indian scholars of Sanskrit), or if that arrangement was his own creation, what attracts the contemporary epistemological researcher to the style of al-Khalīl in the unification of the language and the structuring of his dictionary *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* (*The Book of the Wellspring*) is the methodological principle he employed for imposing order on a scattered language. It is a principle that can only be adopted – transmitted – by a remarkable mathematical mind, a mind that was in no way in contradiction with excellent musical sensibilities which enabled al-Khalīl himself to establish the rhythms of Arabic poetry (from the analysis of poetry and the art of versification), and consequently to establish a new science: *prosody*. How could mathematical intuition contradict musical sensibility, seeing that music at that time was a branch of *mathematics*?

Al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad turned his fine musical sensibility to Arabic poetry, thus inferring from it the cryptic – unseen – patterns that inform it, and proceeded to use his mathematical mind, producing theoretical patterns which are hypothetical, but which are not lacking in principles of the reality of the language, and accorded Arabic phonation to them, beginning from the outset with 'conceptually possible' (mental) utterances while ignoring the 'realistically possible' (actual) except in the phase of experiment

and verification, the phase where the transition from formal mathematical science to the real subjective world is concluded.

Furthermore, it seems to us that al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad, by dealing with the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet as an original set, derived from it all secondary groups implicit within them which comprised two to five elements, was indeed applying consciously an essential aspect of mathematical work founded on set theory in its contemporary version: this issue pertains to the principle upon which al-Khalīl based his famous dictionary, and which was the first dictionary in Arabic, perhaps even the first dictionary of its kind in the history of languages. Al-Khalīl noted that Arabic words are either biliteral, trilateral, quadraliteral or pentaliteral, whereas whatever was above these is an excess and could be disposed of (by removing prefixes, infixes and suffixes and reverting to the root-verb). Accordingly, he began combining the Arabic alphabetical letters with each other by twos and threes and combinations of four and five, exhausting all possible combinations (for instance: *bud*, *dub*, *adab*, *badaʿ*, *abad*, *bāda*, *dāb*, *dabā*, etc.), dropping whatever was repeated, until extracting all possible phonations that can be combined from the Arabic alphabet letters (from two to five letters), reaching, according to some historians, 12,305,412 phonations, namely a character set. And then, he began examining these sets – phonations – and he preserved and catalogued what he found to be utilised such as *‘darabaʿ* (to hit) and disregarded what he found to not be in use – not existing in *Lisān al-‘Arab* – such as *‘jashaṣaʿ*. And if al-Khalīl was unable to conclude his voluminous project, the endeavour of linguists who came immediately after him was *almost* confined to the completion of this project.

This was an abstract use of the methodological principle adopted by al-Khalīl and subsequent linguists in the collection and unification of the language and classifying its utterances. So, if we consider this principle from a purely logical perspective, we should say that we are confronted here with a scientific work, a logical acuity and a rigorous mathematical mentality, and this is what we have indicated previously, and which will remain noteworthy at all times – as long as human reason works in accordance with rules. However, *logic* is one thing, and *reality* is another. And logic must be in the service of reality and not vice versa. When it comes to an existing reality that is ‘progressing’, then it is essential to allow for ‘freedom’ to use the logic of development, which is different from mathematical logic, or else the imposition of nominal and logical forms over reality will destroy its life from within and lead to intolerance and to halting its development.

Indeed, the Arabic ‘miracle’ was a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it transformed the language which was merely based on spontaneity into a scientific language that is codified and precise; and on the other hand, it rendered this same language ‘incapable’ of keeping pace with progress and accepting what needs to be changed and renovated, to which we will now turn.

If we contemplate the outcomes of the principle established by al-Khalīl and the method he followed – which are the selfsame principle and method adopted by linguists afterwards, or at least which were produced by them in their perception of the Arabic language – we will find ourselves confronted by a method of ‘producing’ language and devitalising it into rigid and solid patterns, and not confronted with rules to unite its dispersed pieces and organise its internal life, while maintaining the potential for its progress and renovation. If we recall what we previously stated concerning the role of language in forming the human perception of the world, eventually in shaping man’s reason and the structure of his thought, we would have realised any negative influence that the method of al-Khalīl and the subsequent linguists must have been left on Arab reason (*‘aql*). Al-Khalīl started with the ‘conceptually possible’, treating Arabic letters with a purely mathematical approach, thus limiting the kinds of phonations that they could form. This principle was essential in rendering language a mental production, instead of being the outcome of treating it as a realistic hypothesis. In this case, the process will revert from being a process of collecting the language to a process of pleading the tenability of a theoretical hypothesis. The combination of Arabic root letters with each other to form all possible words – biliteral, trilateral, quadraliteral and pentaliteral – could be regarded as the entire constitution of the Arabic language. And despite the efforts of al-Khalīl and his colleagues in linguistics to distinguish between ‘the employed’ and ‘the neglected’ among these hypothetical linguistic groupings, it was difficult, if not impossible, to draw a final line between what Arabs have and have not enunciated – especially in an atmosphere where passion for ‘the foreign’ prevailed, as we will demonstrate later. It was normal in such a situation that analogical (*al-qiyās*) should prevail over what was acceptable to the ear (*al-sam’*): thus, words are correct because they are possible, and not because they are real, and they are possible as long as there is a root origin to which they can revert or an analogue to which they can be compared; and these are not realistic because the ‘derivative branch’ here is often a theoretical proposition and not a ‘given’ from among the principles of ‘inductive reasoning’ and social experience. And, as we will see below, the role of these theoretical hypotheses in the expansion of the language – rendering it overabundant with phonations

vis-à-vis significations – will, certainly, affect the way Arab reason (*‘aql*) treats language, the language which contributes fundamentally to its creation. However, let us now consider the other side of the issue.

Indeed, the method of al-Khalīl was only one facet of the aspects of the art and synthesis to which the Arabic language was subjected during the Era of Codification, causing it to accrue ‘rigid’ and final patterns, a language that has limited words and constrained transformations, a language that is a-historical, because it is not renewed with modern conditions, nor does it evolve in line with developments through time. There is another position resulting from the same method, or which has come as a reaction to it, and these two matters are possible: we mean what pertains to ‘hearing’ as *asynthesizer* and a *synthesis*.

The process of the collecting and unifying the language and establishing its bases began as a concern and fear for its dissolution and deterioration due to the spreading of solecisms in a society where Arabs had become a small minority. And since the reason behind this solecism was the vast commingling among the urban inhabitants of Iraq and Syria particularly, between Arabs and non-Arab Muslims (*mawālī*), then normally, the ‘correct’ language ought to be expected from the Bedouins – particularly from the tribes that remained isolated and whose Bedouin tribesmen retained their spontaneity and ‘sound’ pronunciation. In this regard, Ibn Jinnī asserts: ‘The reason for all this is what occurred to the current languages and to the town dwellers (*ahl al-madar*) of imbalances, corruption and disorder, and if it was known that city dwellers (*ahl al-madīnah*) would retain their eloquence, and corruption of their language had not occurred, then it would have been an obligation to take from them as if taking from the people of the tents (*ahl al-wabar*), and also if within the people of the tents had occurred what germinated among the language of the town dwellers of disarray and derangement of tongues, and the decrease of eloquent habitude and its diffusion, then it would have been an obligation to reject their language or abandon what is transmitted from them.’²⁷

The compilers and chroniclers of the language have tended, then, to the desert (*bādiyah*), to the ‘pure’ Bedouins, and thus those Bedouins became the ‘unshod, barefoot’, who were consistently in demand. At the beginning of the second century AH, when chronicling the language became a profession, several well-to-do men dedicated themselves to this activity, such as Abū ‘Umar bin ‘Alā’, (d. AH 154), Ḥammād the chronicler (d. AH 155), and al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad (d. AH 170) and several others. The most important condition they stipulated is that the language could be taken

from whoever was rough of skin and eloquent of tongue: ‘the linguists considered the roughness of an Arab, his harshness, and his ongoing deprivation from luxury and skin tenderness – as they called it – the basis for adopting language from him and making arguments on the basis of his discourse’.⁸ The result was that: ‘if a Bedouin acquired Bedouin character and eloquence (*al-faṣāḥah*) – through trial and exposure – it would become his right to judge between the scholars and ascertain the rectitude or error of their influence their opinions, therefore becoming a law by which those scholars would abide and by which they would apply. Thus, with this blessed nomadism, the Bedouin turned into a master for those scholars, who would seek his arbitration between them in their disagreements and disputes.’⁹ Also, the recourse to Bedouins and complete reliance on them in matters of the exactness of the language and setting its foundations led scholars to consider them infallible in language, not that they really believed so, but in order for mistakes not to revert to the rules emanating from their own locution and speech.

With the increasing popularity of the Bedouin and the competition over him, as well as the struggle to gain his satisfaction, the Bedouins began to gain consciousness of their importance and the value of their speech. They began to feel that they possessed something *worthy of a price*. This is what actually transpired, as history tells us that some Bedouins made it their profession to *sell* their speech and that others moved to Basra and Kūfah to settle there as reciters of the language, as speech ‘vendors’. And there were others, urban dwellers, who moved to the desert (*bādiyah*) so that people would speak of them there, and if they acquired fame they would receive as much money as asked. Accordingly, Arabic pronunciation, especially the unfamiliar, desolate, old and rare, became a profitable and a facile way to earn a living.¹⁰

It is worth mentioning that this demand for Bedouins was not only generated by linguists, but also by the path followed by scholars of syntax. Indeed, it is very difficult to distinguish between the linguist and the scholar of syntax, as the linguist was an expert on syntax and vice versa, the only difference being that one of them attached more importance to language as utterances and connotations, while the other was concerned with seeking evidence for the grammatical rules he induced or formulated. The focus was, both in the field of syntax and the field of language, on the old. Whenever a discourse was related to an older era, it was acceptable and requisite: ‘they considered that whatever is old is a sign of high quality, whereas the contemporary and modern is forged, rejected and renounced’.¹¹ Also, they even considered that ‘the development that occurred in the

Arabic language to be a form of erroneousness and a deviation that should be cast aside and disregarded. They imposed a cessation of citation or quoting in matters of syntax and morphology during the mid-second century AH.¹²

Confronted with all of this, one might wonder, if the purpose of collecting and unifying the language and its foundation was to protect the Qurʾān from solecism, then why did the linguists not adopt the Qurʾān itself as the sole basis of their work, especially when it is acknowledged unanimously to be the most eloquent and unequivocal?

Some researchers relate the turning away from the Qurʾān by the ancient linguists, to the sayings of the Bedouins, to the fact that the Qurʾān appeared in seven redactions – or seven dialectical variants (*ahruf sabʿ*) – which consist of different approaches to interpretation. Even though this difference is very limited and miniscule, it posed problems of language and syntax that cannot be resolved except by linguistic and syntactic ‘exegesis,’ of the sacred text, which was inadmissible due to ‘religious diligence’. To dispose of the text is a form of hermeneutics, and this is what they were avoiding.¹³ However, we would like to go beyond this explanation. If the point of departure was to safeguard the Qurʾān from solecism, then it was required to fortify it from without. If we add to this the fact that the need for comprehending its words and expressions increased, and that the weighing of this need was a sort of guiding principle for the work of the linguists, we will realise that, in reality, what was required was to find a meta-language that would form a referential framework for the Qurʾān at the level of the meanings of the words and the figurative expressions. Thus, there was no language which could possibly fulfil this task except that of the Jāhilīyah era, which was still in use among the isolated tribes, in a way similar to the way it was preserved in pre-Islamic poetry. This was the internal logic that governed the relationship between those who collected and unified the language and the scholars of syntax to the Qurʾānic text. This logic is even justified by what was related about Ibn ʿAbbās when he said: ‘If anything is incomprehensible in the Qurʾān refer to poetry, as poetry is Arabic.’ A similar assertion is attributed to the Prophet himself.¹⁴

In order to fully comprehend the practical circumstances that determined and imposed this logic, we must remember that at that time, the Arabic language used to be written without diacritical marks, and used to be written, and still is, without indications of vocalisation. For instance, the word ‘*nabagha*’ used to be written without the dots used in modern script (which in this case determine the initial, medial and final characters), therefore, the ‘graphical’ written word could be pronounced as

'*nabagha*' or '*nab'a*' or '*taba'a*' or '*bata'a*' or '*bay'a*', to name a few possibilities, to say nothing of the way in which these various possibilities could be *vowelled* (i.e., vocalised). What we seek to emphasise through this simple example is that it would have only been possible to group and unify the Arabic language through words as they are *pronounced* and not as it is written. The Qur'ān was both written and pronounced, and in order to justify a certain way of reading it, it was indispensable to rely on the aural language.¹⁵ And only the language of the Bedouins could fulfil this role. Perhaps the proof of this matter is that the word 'misreading' (*taṣḥīf*), which means solecism and erroneous, has its roots, as al-Maqqarī asserts, 'that a man takes his pronunciation in [the act of] pronunciation out of his reading a written page, and which is not heard by other men so as to render it accurate'.¹⁶ Hence, linguists and scholars of syntax sought language from the Bedouins who did not know how to write, to the extent that some of them used to pretend not to be able to write – in cases where they did know how – in order to be trusted and then be reported [as such]. There are many stories that relate how some Bedouins were 'caught' reading or writing, and how they pleaded with whoever discovered that fact to cover it up and conceal it.

It was not our goal to draw this picture of the process of collecting and unifying the language and establishing its bases, for its own sake. The books of literature, language, and history are replete with detail. Even some of the more contemporary books are serious enough and well researched to fulfil the needs of the unspecialised researcher.¹⁷ However, our goal was to uncover some illustrations of the reality which will allow conclusions regarding the outcomes related to our subject.

Two essential characteristics of the Arabic language can be drawn from the previous presentation: its ahistoricity and its tangibility.

On the one hand, if the nominal patterns, in which al-Khalīl and his colleagues moulded the Arabic language, furnished it with some sort of internal dynamism (i.e., derivation), thus making it more flexible, this – at the same time – caused it to become more 'resistant' to the change and development engendered by history. Therefore, the Arabic language remained, and still is, since at least the time of al-Khalīl, unchanged in syntax, morphology, the connotations of its phonations and words, and in the manner of its self-reproduction. This is what we mean when we say that it is a language which is ahistorical. It is *above* history and does not meet the requirements of progress.

On the other hand, the grouping and unification of the language strictly from nomadic Bedouins must have left an 'influence' on it; some Bedouin

particularities due to the circumstances of their livelihood, mainly the tangible (concrete, sensate) nature of their thinking and perceptions. The process of the collecting and unification of the language from the Bedouins, to the exclusion of any others, confines the world of this language to the boundaries of *their* world. And, since they live ‘instinctively’ and ‘innately’ – that is, a life that is rudimentary and sensate, this must have influenced their way of thinking and consequently the language that was collected from them and evaluated according to their norms. Hence the observation of a contemporary author that ‘Arabic words are rooted in nature and the principle of rightness in it was established by innateness and *not* by custom and habit’¹⁸ and, consequently, ‘the word that cannot be retrieved from a vocative form that is derived from nature, and from within Arabic production, is extrinsic to Arabic’.¹⁹

Despite the fact that we value and respect the incentives and goals behind this writer’s observations about the particularities of the Arabic language and its ‘philosophy’, we believe that objectivity and academic spirit require naming things accurately and stating their objective and true significance. The ahistoricity of the Arabic language, just as the case with its sensate (tangible, concrete) nature, is not a virtue, nor a concealment of an illusionary philosophy peculiar to it and its people, that should be inferred and its authenticity emphasised. No. The ahistoricity and sensate tangible nature of the Arabic language are given historical facts that should not be ceded without question, but examined critically. The world where the Arabic language was born, or at least collected, is ahistorical and sensate one: the world of Arab Bedouins who lived an extended time like the extent of the desert (*ṣaḥrāʾ*) itself; a time of repetition and monotony of place or even a space (naturally, culturally and mentally) that is empty and serene, everything in it is sensate – a visual or auditory image. This world is all that the Arabic language transmits to its people, today and in the past, and will remain as it is as long as this language is subject to the criteria of the Era of Codification and its limitations.

We have just indicated that those who collected and unified the language and the scholars of syntax abandoned the adoption of the Qurʾān as a primary reference and had recourse to the ‘wild’ Bedouins who were deeply impoverished. Whatever the impetus was behind this course of action, the outcome was that the Arabic language collected from the Bedouins was meagre when compared with the Qurʾānic text. While the Qurʾānic text adopted non-Arabic words and Arabicised them, the classical lexicography considered those words as extrinsic interpolations and dealt with them as such. The reliance of those who unified and collected the language on the

criterion of 'Bedouin roughness', caused the Arabic language to lose many words and new concepts mentioned in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, and which were widespread in the society of Mecca and Medina, especially words pertaining to civilisations. Accordingly, the Arabic language, the language of lexicons and syntax, was less extensive and less flexible than the language of the Qur'ān, and consequently less civilised than the latter. And this is partly what made the Qur'ān broader and more fertile, while making the Arabic language, as delineated by the Era of Codification, incapable of fully absorbing its richness. Naturally, this influenced the comprehension of the Qur'ān by the Arabs themselves, as many of the words and meanings in this 'pellucid book' (*kitāb mubīn*) do not have accurate or precise meanings in this language which was collected from the Bedouins, and this remained, and is still, subject to continuous disagreement. This situation will remain as such, for how can it be resolved when the meta-language is unable to account for it?

What struck the Arabic language in terms of cultural poverty due to the abandonment of the Qur'ānic text by linguists and scholars of syntax when they collected and unified the language and founded its rules, would multiply time and again because they also failed to draw any kind of 'civilisation' from the cultural centres as well as the more or less civilised tribes, such as the tribe of Quraysh itself. One cannot but be astonished when realising that the Arabic language does not transmit to us the names of the tools and implements and the kinds of relations known in the societies of Mecca and Medina during the time of the Prophet and the four Rāshidūn caliphs, or the societies of Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo. These were highly civilised societies which utilised, undoubtedly, countless tools and devices and dealt with countless transactions. Whoever evaluates these Arab-Islamic societies according to the criterion of the Arabic language as preserved by the dictionaries will find himself compelled to judge them to have persisted in silence and to have been motionless while being among the most active and discursive of societies.²⁰

Indeed, solecism became widespread, as Ibn al-Athīr asserts: 'when the time of the beneficence of the [second-generation] followers had gone [in the mid-second century], the Arabic tongue had been replaced by non-Arabic or almost, thus, do you only see few among the fluent in it and preservers of it'.²¹ But the escape from solecism to the language of the 'pure Bedouins' led to the free reign of 'solecism', making it the language of interactions and dealing, the language of life, and the everyday language, whereas 'safeguarding' 'classical' Arabic led to its consolidation at a primitive, meagre civilisational stage – that of the 'pre-history' of the Arabs.

This civilisational poverty in the Arabic language is placed in apposition to the wealth of the Bedouin, exemplified particularly in an abundance of synonyms, an abundance due – in part – to the artificial derivation of al-Khalīl’s technique, and in other to ‘acceptance through usage’ by different tribes. On the one hand, artificial derivation must have led to the proliferation of words that are of one root, all remaining in the scope of the ‘employed’, as long as one of them is utilisable, and which would then be considered as a root from which to make derivations, despite the fact that the words derived from it might be unheard of or unemployable. Thus, the language of the lexicon becomes the language of ‘the root and the derivative’ which is broader than the language of reality, but only within the scope of the ‘roughness of the Bedouin’. On the other hand, to adopt language from different tribes – not only from one tribe such as Quraysh – must have led to the phenomenon of *lughat al-ḍāḍ* (‘the language of ḍāḍ’) (i.e., Arabic as it is sometimes called after the conviction that it is the language which exhibits the distinctive, emphatic consonantal fricative ‘ḍ’ known as ḍāḍ), which is in a large part due, not to the existence of subtle differences in meaning as some ‘specialists’ assert, but to the difference of sources from which the word was taken: the same things could be termed differently from one tribe to another, and since language was adopted from several tribes, then there is a multiplicity of names for the same thing.

The artificial derivation set up by moving from articulation/utterance to meaning (as if we could derive *baḍāra* from *ḍāra*, where we subsequently search for a meaning for the new term, etc.), as well as a verbalisation from the Bedouins (with whatever comes along with it such as the making and trading of wordings), and adopting them from several tribes which resulted in having different names for a single thing, indeed, all this conferred upon the Arabic language an ‘overabundance in pronunciation when compared to meaning’,²² but only for a certain world without the other, that is, the world of the Bedouin and not that of the city dwellers.

The outcome was that the standard Arabic language, the language of the dictionaries, literature and poetry – in one word, the language of *culture* – is communicating to its people a world that is extremely different from their own (and this difference is increasing with time), a Bedouin world which they live out in their perceptions, even in their ideas and feelings, a world that contradicts the technological and civilised world which they actually inhabit, which continues to become more enriched and more complex. Would we exaggerate if we tend to say that the Bedouin is really the *maker* of the Arabic ‘world’, the world Arabs live in in terms of word,

idiom, imagination and perception, and even in terms of reason (*‘aql*), values and feelings, and that this world is incomplete, meagre, shallow and arid, natural-sensate and ahistorical, reflecting ‘pre-historical’ Arabs: the pre-Islamic era of the *Jāhiliyah*, the era before the ‘conquests’ and the establishment of state?

The Syntax and Patterns of Arabic

If the usage of the Bedouin as what was acceptable to the ear delineated the boundaries of the world that the classical Arabic language conveyed to its people, then the production of the linguists and scholars of syntax shaped the mind (*‘aql*) that implements its effectiveness in and through this language, Arab reason (*‘aql*) which is engendered by Arab culture in its people. Indeed, the endeavour of the scholars of syntax was not limited to deriving the rules of the Arabic tongue from Arab wordings, but was in fact codifying these wordings and their curtailment through patterns they considered to be absolute and final, and in order to be so, it should have been logical, that is, to establish logical formulas in the language that govern its internal dynamism, and consequently obliterate any possibility of its progress.

We have previously referred to the method of al-Khalīl, and the general method followed by linguists, which is based on derivation, and we said that this derivation establishes the point of view that moves from pronunciation towards meaning. Also, we must add here that the pronunciations from which the process of derivation begins are taken in the form of the verb or what it connotes (i.e., the source (*al-maṣḍar*) is a happening, namely a verb, timeless), which establishes the movement also from verb to derivatives. These derivatives are not subject to [the method of] acceptance through usage in the process of derivation, but had criteria devised for them, which are in fact logical patterns, which are for syntax and its specialists similar to categories for logic and logicians.

So what constitutes these patterns?

A contemporary researcher argues: ‘the patterns of pronunciations and the formulas of words in Arabic are musical scales, in that every one of those patterns and every one of those structures is a stable rhythmic, musical intonation (*nagħmah*)’. In other words: ‘the forms of pronunciations in Arabic are, on the one hand, structures and patterns and forms,

and on the other hand, musical tones/scales recognised by the ear easily and simply. The listener realises part of the meaning just by recognising the scale of the word. The harmonising of pronunciations to (musical) scales is evidence in most cases that there is agreement in the meaning of the pattern or its type: such as noun of instrument, place, or superlative or objective case.⁷ As a result of this, the Arabic language has a musical particularity: As ‘Arabic wordings, whether prose or poetry, is a set of scales, it is nothing else but a particular arrangement of musical types’ and the comparison ‘between the rhythm of wordings and its subject matter’ is extant and clear in the Arabic language.²³

Either the patterns of the Arabic language and the formulations of its wording consisting of rhythmic scale meters are very obvious to everyone who examines these patterns, scales and meters, or this particularity, like the ones that were mentioned by the Arabic researcher to whom we previously referred, is a virtue of the Arabic language. Yet, this is not the concern of the objective study of the language. And, if we must give our opinion, as we have tended towards criticism in our study, we believe that the rhythmic character of the Arabic word complements its sensate (tangible) character, the character mentioned by the aforementioned Arabic researcher as ‘the stability of the relation between meaning and phonation’ in the Arabic language.²⁴ It is sufficient for the researcher to realise that the derivative nouns, which is among the categories posited by scholars of syntax, are distinguished by their phonations. Thus, the form for the ‘subject/doer’ on the pattern [wazn] *fā’il* where the *alif* (i.e., the long vowel ‘ā’) being subject to an effect indicates the ‘active/nominative case’ as in *qātīl* (killer); and the ‘object of an action/ ‘accusative case’ (on the pattern *maf’ūl*) is indicated by *wāw* for as in *majrūh* (wounded); and where *yā’* (on the pattern *fa’il*) may indicate either an active form as in *karīm* (generous), or for a passive/reflexive form (*infi’āl*) as in *qatīl* (murdered); and where a *shaddah* on the stressed middle radical and an *alif* (on the pattern of *fa’āl*) yield intensification as in ‘a racer (trying to outstrip another)’ as in *sabbāq*; and the initial *hamzah* (on the pattern *af’al*) for superlatives as in *aḥsan* (better), and so on. Thus, the verbalised phonic form gives the derivatives their logical connotations. In other words the ‘[Arabic] structures and patterns have a mental and logical function. Hence, the Arabs adopted special patterns and structures for general connotations or logical categories in their language, thus giving efficiency, effectiveness, time and space, causality and proficiency, phonetics and sympathy, device and comparative, phenomenon, and several other connotations, special formulas and patterns, in such a manner that any clause of these phonetics built according

to such formulae and formulated according to such patterns, will lead to the same meaning that is associated with that clause.’ These ‘structures in Arabic impart the classification of connotations and the linking of what is similar to it in one link. Also, Arabs learn logic and the logical thinking of their language, both tacitly and innately.’²⁵

If we emphasise these observations, nevertheless we do not agree with their author when he asserts that: ‘the Arabs have adopted special patterns and structures for the general connotations and logical categories in their language’ and that is because Arabs speak ‘innately’ as it is said. Accordingly, they did not ‘adopt special patterns’ for general connotations, and whoever did so, or at least established and rendered it a universal rule, that is, a logic for the language, were the scholars of syntax. As an example one may find in the Arab wording that which contravenes those logical rules as the form of the ‘active doer/subject’ (*fāʿil*) may appear in the meaning of ‘object’ (*mafʿūl*) or the form *ʿfaʿil* may appear as a ‘subject’ (*fāʿil*), etc. Perhaps what confirms the prominent role played by the scholars of syntax in patterning the Arabic language in logical forms is that they imposed upon it a multitude of irregularities, knowing that ‘irregularities’ decrease with time, becoming neglected and forgotten. As for the artificial side in the discourse of syntax, it is sufficient when emphasising it to mention the saying of the Bedouin who heard the discourse of the scholars of syntax and said, speaking to a group of them: ‘you speak of our speech with words that are not of it’, meaning that their language consisted, for the Bedouin, of ‘the phenomena of a language in a language predetermined amongst its people’ according to Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī the syntactician, who made this assertion about the language of logicians.

Indeed, Arab scholars of syntax perceived Aristotelian logic as an interfering and interpolated competitor that offended ‘their logic’ on their own turf. This is obviously reflected in the attitude of the Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī in the famous debate between him and Abū Bishr Mattā bin Yūnis the logician in Baghdad in AH 326, in the presence of the minister al-Faḍl bin Jaʿfar bin al-Furāt.²⁶ For al-Sīrāfī, logic ‘was posited by a man from Greece on the language of its inhabitants, their practice of it, and what they know of it, such as its representations and attributes’, and therefore it only binds the Greeks. For this reason, he addresses Mattā saying: ‘Then you do not call us to [learn] logic, but to learn the Greek language’ because logic, Aristotelian logic, is the *syntax* of the Greek language just as Arabic syntax is the *logic* of the Arabic language. In other words: ‘Syntax is logic but is disengaged (detached) from Arabic and logic is syntax but comprehended through language’, hence, the utilisation of Aristotelian logic in the Arabic

language, or its applicability to it, is equivalent to: ‘the generation of a language in a language predetermined amongst its people’. And we must note here that the predetermined language among its people al-Sīrāfī referred to which, is not the Arabic language that was naturally determined among the Arab people, but the Arabic syntactical language as determined by their Arabic grammarians and syntacticians, and which was itself equivalent to a language generated in a predetermined language among its Arab and Bedouin people.

Linguists and syntacticians cast Arabic speech into logical patterns reflecting sensate (tangible) forms, often phonic/vocalised ones. And if these patterns did really exist in the language of the Arabs, among other patterns, their universalisation by syntacticians and their imposition as rules and laws has retained the Arabic language as an artificial one, in a twofold manner (the position of the Bedouins and the elocutors on one side, and the production of syntacticians and linguists on the other), a language that conveys with it the world of the Bedouin, the impoverished nomad, in rigid patterns, with a musical tonality. It is not surprising if one notices that the musical tonality in the Arabic language compensates or conceals the poverty of meaning and renders the wording, which drags along with it a surplus of phonations, with a meaning even if it does not have any. Here, the ear replaces reason (*‘aql*) in determining acceptance or refusal. Also, it is well-known in the Arabic language that it is the ear that ‘finds [things] agreeable’ rather than reason (*‘aql*).

The Bedouin World, Criterion of Authenticity

It was not only linguists and syntacticians who were the sole codifiers of the Arabic language and establishers of its ahistorical sensate (tangible) character within logical patterns and phonetic structures. Rhetoricians (*al-balāghīyūn*) did the same when they validated and established, at the end of the same Era of Codification, precisely Bedouin criteria in rhetorical criticism; criteria that made the pre-Islamic Jāhili model – the Bedouin model in particular – govern poetic production and literary taste throughout centuries. It is by reason of this that al-Jāhiz declared: ‘Of the perfection of the sense of poetry is to be a Bedouin poet’²⁷ because ‘the land of the pure Bedouins is the core of true eloquence’²⁸ and therefore ‘a poet does not become a poet laureate until he recites the poetry of the Arabs, hears

the accounts and is aware of the connotations, while the utterances turn in his ears. The first of these is that he learn prosody in order for it to become a reference for his discourse and syntax in order to reform his tongue and engage in its parsing, and then lineage and lore and legend [*ayyām al-nās*] to draw upon it in knowing virtues and faults and mentioning them in eulogy or vilification.²⁹ This is because poetic potency for them can only be achieved by imitating the Bedouin poet in the ‘power’ of his utterances, his modes of expression, types of similes and metaphors, and by following his example in the same subjects, such as eulogy and vilification, and glorifications and elegy. It is due to this that innovation was restricted to the so-called ‘reproduction’ and ‘subtle imitation’. Reproduction is when ‘the poet extracts meaning from a previous poet’s meanings, makes an addition to these, or intensifies such’.³⁰ Whereas a fine imitation is when ‘a speaker comes across a meaning created by another, and imitates it in a fine way so as to merit intensification, in a way or another, which renders the latter deserving of the meaning of the former’.³¹ And similar to the pre-Islamic Bedouin model, which was deemed to be the absolute referential authority in terms of meaning, were also the poetic patterns, even in what was termed ‘necessity’. Abū ‘Alī al-Fārisī says: ‘As we were allowed to compare our prosody to theirs, we are also allowed to compare our poetry to theirs [i.e., to pre-Islamic poets of the Jāhilīyah]. Thus, what was allowed of a necessity for them is also for us, and what made them vigilant makes us cautious as well. And if this is the case, what was necessarily the best or the worst for them, is so for us, or anything in between.’³²

In fact, the critics of the rhetoricians, both early and later ones, drew their criteria from the earliest linguists, particularly those belonging to the school of Basra which ‘put the entire language into logical and mental patterns’ and transformed them into incontrovertible paradigms. As long as this linguistic order established by the school of Basra was determined in light of the poetry of the ancients, so the modern poet necessarily seeks to operate within the predetermined linguistic frameworks, which were delimited for him previously. Perpetual return to the ancient linguistic traditions, or the so-called method of the Arabs, became the standard criterion or fundamental principle through which linguists comprehend the poetry of the modernists. This matter supports the sense of the sanctity of the language itself and diminishes the sense of what could possibly occur in it of development and change; and the linguist will not perceive, in this case, radical changes in taste or modes of poetic expression; rather, he will remain engaged with his ancient material, attempting to contemplate everything new through it, and assesses every new invention

in comparison to it. When the matter is thus, then there will definitely be a perpetual conflict with the poets who dispute the idea of fixed patterns such as Ibn al-A‘rābī who asserted – after he heard the poetry of Abū Tammām – ‘If this is poetry then the speech [*kalām*] of the Arabs is void.’ This is a conservative attitude, unaware of the change and development in poetry, and even if it recognises these, it will not sympathise with such, since the poetry of latter-day poets, as Ibn al-A‘rābī also asserts, ‘is the like of sweet basil, one day you appreciate its scent, but when it withers it is thrown away, whereas the poetry of the ancient is the like of musk and amber, the more you waft it, the more it increases in pungency’.³³

The Origins of the Language and Modernisation

True, the modern is ‘sniffed . . . and flung onto the rubbish heap’ and the ancient ‘is the like of musk and amber, the more you waft it, the more it increases in pungency’. This is the law that ruled and continues to rule the ‘development’ of Arabic literature, or rather all of Arab thought, from the Era of Codification to the present. It is the law imposed by the ‘world’ provided by the Arabic language to its people, the world consecrated by linguistic production and commended by ‘Bedouin’ the master of all *‘ulamā’*. And we should not assume that this was a peculiarity of a certain period of our cultural history, the control of the ancient and the hegemony of the Bedouin world over literary taste, even over Arab thought in general, is still prevalent. So as not to speak at great length of a matter which is not our entire subject, we conclude with this statement noted by one of the senior Arab researchers in the modern era, who is this even the most serious and productive.

The master Aḥmad Amīn wrote, while comparing the ‘literature of the Bedouins’ and ‘the literature of the urban dwellers’ during the first ‘Abbāsī era, the following: ‘undoubtedly, there were two kinds of literature in that era: an Arab pure literature which is not greatly influenced by civilisation, nor the culture of the various different nations; this literature, as we indicated, is full of spirit, gracefully uttered, where there is not a lot of wine to be found, neither love poetry for men, nor love poetry [*ghazals*] for singing girls, nor does one find adultery, nor uninhibited obscenity. Also, you do not find in it depth of thinking, diligence, or philosophy of expression . . . and as for literature of the urbanites, like one sees in the writings of

‘Umar bin Mas‘adah and Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, who was heavily influenced by the Persians, and in my opinion, was not as humorous or as gentle and pleasant as the former, the mind must deviate to a degree in order to comprehend it.’³⁴

Yes, the modern Arab mind, in the twenty-first century, ‘needs to change direction somewhat in order to comprehend the literature of urbanites’ that was composed during the first ‘Abbāsid era, the era of prosperity for Arab culture. However, the mind does not need to make any adjustment in its sensations nor in its criteria in order to comprehend the ‘literature of the Bedouins’, namely the literature of the Jāhilīyah era, or what trod in its steps in terms of structure and meaning.

Why?

Because ‘pure Arabic literature’, the literature of ‘the world of the Bedouin’, that is sensate and ahistorical does not exhibit ‘depth of thinking, diligence, nor philosophy in expression’, and this is very normal and understood because the world of the Bedouin cannot afford to tolerate depth of thinking. However, what is abnormal, and should be understood in order to be changed, is that the Arab reason remains bound to this very date to that sensate and ahistorical world as founded by the Era of Codification, by depending on the lowest levels of the Arab culture throughout history, that of the nomadic Bedouin, which was taken up as the source par excellence, and as such imposed a certain means of judgment on Arab reason (*‘aql*), consisting of judging the new *through* the old.

Not only was this the case in language and literature but also in other fields, those fields which were unique to ‘reason’, subsequent chapters will provide views of the obverse side of the same coin.

Notes

1. Al-Khuḍarī, Muḥammad, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Istiqāmah, 1938), p. 204.
2. Schiff, Adam, *Langage et Connaissance* (Paris: Anthropos, 1967), pp. 5–6.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 292–293.
5. Zabel, François, *Takwīn al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī* (Beirut: Ma‘had al-Inmā’ al-‘Arabī, 1976), p. 131.
6. See Ibn Nadīm’s index (Flügel edition), pp. 42–43.
7. Ibn Jinnī, *Al-Khaṣā‘iṣ*, vol. 1, p. 405.
8. ‘Īd, Muḥammad, *al-Riwāyah wa al-Istishbād bi-l-Lughah* (Cairo: ‘Ālam al-Kitāb, 1976), p. 5.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
10. For details: *ibid.*

11. Ibid., p. 159.
12. Bishr, Muḥammad Kamāl, *Dirāsāt fī 'Ilm al-Lughah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'arif, 1969), Part II, p. 128.
13. 'Īd, *al-Riwāyah wa al-Istishbād*, pp. 126–127.
14. Tha'lab says as maintained by the Prophet and cited by Ibn 'Abbās: if you fall in doubt about anything in Qur'ān, then seek it in poetry. See: *Majālis Tha'lab*, p. 317. Also cited in: 'Aṣfūr, Jābir Aḥmad, *al-Ṣūrah al-Fannīyah fī al-Turāth al-Naqdī al-Balāghī* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfah for publication, 1974), index 1, p. 153.
15. It is worth recalling that the word Qur'ān means *recitation*, and it is the *recited* form which is considered authoritative in *fiqh* and in Islam in general and *not* the written form which is properly known as the *muṣṣḥaf*. [Editor.]
16. Amīn, Aḥmad, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyah, 1961), vol. 2, p. 260.
17. The books of 'Īd and 'Aṣfūr that we referred repeatedly to are among the most reliable in this concern.
18. Al-Arsūzī, Zakī, *al-Mu'alafāt al-Kāmilah* (Damascus: The Syrian Ministry of Culture, 1979), p. 258.
19. Ibid., p. 82.
20. What the author is suggesting is that attempting to access the state of high technological development which is known to have existed during the 'Abbāsīd period would not be accurately reflected in the language as it was collected. That is, the technical lexicon which undoubtedly existed was excluded from the classical dictionaries of the language. [Editor.]
21. 'Īd, *al-Riwāyah wa al-Istishbād*, p. 106.
22. Zabel, *Takwīn al-Kitāb al-'Arabī*, p. 110.
23. Mubārak, Muḥammad, *Fiqh al-Lughah wa Khaṣā'is al-'Arabīyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1975), pp. 280–282.
24. Al-Arsūzī, *al-Mu'alafāt al-Kāmilah*, p. 345.
25. Mubārak, *Fiqh al-Lughah*, pp. 278–279.
26. See the text of the debate 'al-Imtinā' wa al-Mu'ānasah' by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, laylah 17.
27. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, vol. 1, p. 108.
28. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 26.
29. Ibn Rashīq, *al-'Umdah fī Maḥāsīn al-Shi'r*, ed. by Muḥammad Muḥīy al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1972), vol. 1, p. 132.
30. Ibid., p. 126.
31. Ibn Abī al-Iṣba', *Tahrīr al-Ta'bīr*, p. 475. Cited by: 'Aṣfūr, *al-Ṣūrah al-Fannīyah*, pp. 110.
32. Ibn Jinnī, *Al-Khaṣā'is*, vol. 1, p. 329.
33. 'Aṣfūr, *al-Ṣūrah al-Fannīyah*, pp. 148–149.
34. Same givens already mentioned and the emphasis within the text is mine. See: Amīn, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 306.

CHAPTER 5

Legitimising the Legitimiser

(*al-tashrī‘ li-l-musharri‘*)¹

1: The Codification of ‘Opinion’ and ‘Legitimation’ of the Past

If it were admissible to name Islamic culture according to one of its products, then we would call it ‘the culture of *fiqh* (jurisprudence)’ in the same sense that applies to Greek culture when we call it a ‘culture of philosophy’ and contemporary European culture as a ‘culture of science and technology’. In fact, whether we judge the intellectual production of Islamic culture in terms of quantity or quality, we would indisputably find that *fiqh* occupies first place. What has been written about *fiqh*, from the extensive treatises (*muṭawwalāt*) to their condensed versions (*mukhtaṣarāt*) and from glosses (*shurūḥ*) to commentaries on glosses (*shurūḥ al-shurūḥ*) is beyond count. Furthermore, until recently, not a single Islamic household, from the Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean – or even if we go as far afield as Asia and Africa – will be lacking have at least one book on *fiqh*. In other words, every Muslim who is capable of reading the Arabic language necessarily has to have been in direct contact with books on *fiqh*. (Therefore, in this regard, *fiqh* was ‘the fairer apportionment among people’ within the Arab-Islamic community,) thus it must have left a strong influence on it, not only in the daily-life conduct of both the individual and the group – which constitutes its primary target – but also in the ‘conduct’ of the mind – that is, in the way and production of thought).

This is in regard to dissemination, in terms of *quantity*. As for ‘authenticity’ (*al-aṣālah*) or quality, it must be said without hesitation that Islamic *fiqh* is a pure Arab-Islamic product. In this regard, it constitutes, aside

from linguistics, the particular contribution of Arab-Islamic culture (tradition). Some Orientalists sought in vain to find a direct or indirect connection between Roman law and Islamic *fiqh*, and those of them who insisted on seeking such a connection could not go beyond saying that: 'Through its applicability in the Orient, Roman laws by way of their implementation left behind a 'legal which became part of these countries' customs and habits, and that [type of] this and these customs entered into Islamic laws inadvertently.'² It is apparent that such a modest claim is inadequate to become a hypothesis which stands to be proven; yet even so, it is still more modest than the beliefs and theories that confirm that Roman law was itself founded on ancient Egyptian and Chaldean laws.³ Nevertheless, the Italian Orientalist Santillana, who was the first to hypothesise the influence of Roman laws on Islamic *fiqh*, and who continues to be considered an authority in this subject, was compelled to recant what might have reinforced this hypothesis – which was in fact a hasty supposition – where, in a relatively late article, he did not hesitate to state that: 'We have vainly tried to seek one origin for both Eastern and Western laws (Islamic and Roman) as it has been sustained. The Islamic law is characterised by having predetermined boundaries and ingrained principles, which cannot be associated with or related to our legislations and laws because it is a religious law that is different from our thought in the first place.'⁴

Additionally, when we accord special prominence to *fiqh* in Arab-Islamic culture, in terms of quantity and quality, we do not intend to become a part of the process of self-glorification prevalent in contemporary Arabic discourse, as a response to the challenges of the West. Rather, we seek to reiterate the following truth: Islamic *fiqh* was, and continues to be, the product of the Arab reason nearest to expressing its particularity; and the history of the development of *fiqh* justifies this truth.

On the one hand, *fiqh* was the field of intersection of several specialisations before, during and after the epoch of codification. As the great Orientalist Hamilton Gibb noted, during the first three centuries AH, the working of *fiqh* took command of the intellectual faculty of the Islamic *ummah* in an unprecedented way. Not only were the contributors to this field scholars of theology and *ḥadīth* and administrators, but also linguists, historians, and literati who assiduously participated in the collection of treatises on legislation and in the debates on issues of law. Rarely has law permeated the life and thought of a nation as it did during the primary stages of Islamic civilisation.⁵

On the other hand, except for the Shī'ite Muslims who had their own

particular *fiqh* transmitted from their imams, confessional differences from within the field of *fiqh* jurisprudence were not always subject to theological debates and political dogmatism. On the contrary, the theology of the Mu'tazilite, the Ash'arite, the Maturidite (followers of Abū Manṣūr al-Maturidī's theology) and Salafis were rather dispersed among the different schools of *fiqh* in a way that rendered the school of *fiqh* prevalent over all others. Thus, faced with a multiplicity of denominations, theological groups (*firaq*) and political factions, we find *fiqh* redistributing roles to scholarly persons which made them concur with one another on the level of *fiqh* schools of thought. Despite their differences in ideology, politics and philosophy, the scholars undoubtedly contributed to rendering Arab-Islamic culture structured through channels and paths welding all its elements of multiple directions together, and becoming nothing but *fiqh* and *fiqh* schools of thought.

Another phenomenon that confirms the power of *fiqh* and its autonomy in Arab-Islamic culture should be registered here, and that is that the 'transmitted ancient legacies of the past' which confronted Islam in terms of creed had *no* impact on Islamic law (*sharī'ah*). Also, history did not record any conflict or struggle between 'ancient law' and Islamic law, neither did it record any influence of 'ancient rights and duties' (*ḥuqūq*) on Islamic rights as previously indicated. Islamic law, which remained Islamic in origin and development, replaced previous laws in all conquered lands, without history recording – as opposed to what was the case with creed – any struggle or friction between the 'old' pre-Islamic antecedent and the new Islam, whether it was related to personal status law or any other. Here, in the field of *fiqh*, 'Islam preponderated over all that preceded it' completely. True there were a number of customary laws (*a'rāf*), some of which were absorbed and adopted by Islam and others about which it maintained silence. However, what interests us here is not the degree of implementation of *fiqh* in Islam, but rather its theoretical structure or framework in the first instance; in other words, *fiqh thinking* (*tafkīr*). In this respect – in the sphere of opinions and theories – all cultures and laws prior to Islam had no impact on Islamic *fiqh* reasoning.

In fact, we must distinguish between practical *fiqh* and theoretical *fiqh*. Thus, during the time of the Prophet and his Companions until the end of the Umayyad era, *fiqh* was *not* theoretical but *actual*. People rather sought the legal ruling for events, by inquiring about them after their occurrence or bringing them to court and resolving them according to the ruling dictated by the *sharī'ah*. So, events were never postulated as 'suppositions'. As for what transpired later with the Era of Codification, '*fiqh*

started to yield more as a result of theories and postulations than it did from actualities and practice'.⁶ *Fiqh* began to resemble some kind of mental mathematics in which events were postulated and resolved. Furthermore, during this process of postulation, the *fuqahā'* were not bound by 'the actually possibly', but rather took 'conceptual mental possibilities' to the furthest possible limits, which caused *fiqh* in Islamic culture to play almost the same role played by mathematics in Greek and modern European cultures. From here derives its significance for epistemological research in Arab-Islamic culture and subsequently for Arab reason itself.

In fact, not only had *fiqh* employed all Arab-Islamic sciences, including the sciences of the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, linguistics, syntax and theology, but also, in a wider scope, arithmetic, and particularly in regard to the rules of inheritance (*mawārīth*). The rules of inheritance or the law of distribution of estates (*farā'id*) were closer to mathematics than to any other science in Arab culture, and perhaps we can go beyond this with the relationship between Arabic mathematics and Islamic *fiqh* if we consider the advanced status of mathematics in terms of practical need. Thus, if the need for physics during the modern era propelled mathematics – with Descartes, Fayette, and Newton, and so on – to new points of departure in the path of continuous advancement, then the need for theoretical *fiqh* and particularly the rules of inheritance, the law of distribution of estates (*farā'id*), had led Arabic mathematics to progress and innovate and even to the 'creation' of algebra and the science of balancing. We are almost positive that 'Arabic algebra' owes its existence to *fiqh* and the *fuqahā'*. And, even if we are not able to confirm that the founder of algebra and balancing equations (*al-muqābalah*) in Islam is Muḥammad bin Mūsā al-Khawārizmī – author of *al-Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar fī Ḥisāb al-Jabr wa-l-Muqābalah* (*The Compendious Book on Calculation by Algebra and Balancing*) – who lived at the time of the caliph Ma'mūn, and had been involved in *fiqh* (which we do not rule out), he himself asserts in the forward to his book that he wrote it for the sake 'of people's need for it in their inheritance, wills, divisions, judgements, and trade'. It is interesting that the second section of his book, devoted to issues pertaining to *fiqh*, is entitled *Kitāb al-Waṣāyā* (*The Book of Wills*) after he has explained, in the first section, the general theoretical issues such as roots, equations and other.⁷

Also of note is the definition of algebra and balancing equations by the author of the book *Mafātīḥ al-Ulūm* (*Keys of the Sciences*) as 'algebra and balancing [of equations] are products among those of arithmetic and a good means to extract and solve the complicated dilemmas in wills,

inheritance, dealings, and propositions'.⁸ Also worthy of note is the fact that Ibn Khaldūn classifies the science of inheritance and distribution of estates among 'arithmetic sciences' and considers it to be a branch of arithmetic and algebra, balancing equations and operations. He defines it as an 'arithmetic production in the adjustment of shares for those who have obligations in inheritance. This product entails part of *fiqh*, which is the laws of inheritance . . . and part of arithmetic.'⁹ And if Ibn Khaldūn subsumed the laws of distribution of estates (*farā'id*) within the arithmetic sciences according to the principle he employed in the classification of all transmitted and rational sciences, perhaps the inclusion of algebra and balancing of equations within *fiqh*, and *not* vice versa, is more accurate, especially if we consider it as an instrument for the scholar of *fiqh*, namely as subsidiary science to *fiqh*.

The Science of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*

If the previous observations highlight, in different ways, the importance of *fiqh* in Arab-Islamic culture, then the more important matter for our subject is the method of theoretical production in *fiqh*, meaning: 'the science of the root fundamentals of law' – the *uṣūl al-fiqh*. In fact, the authenticity of Islamic *fiqh*, and subsequently the 'particularity' of the reason producing it – the Arab reason – is attributable to this science of methodology which is unparalleled in either earlier or subsequent cultures. As professor Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh has noted, 'the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh* is the first attempt in the world to establish a science for law as distinguished from the special laws of particulars regarding this or that conduct, a science which can be applied to the study of law in any country at any time'. Laws and customs have always existed in every society. Thus, besides the Code of Hammurabi, there were the Greek Twelve Tables, the Roman codes of Gaius and Justinian (*Corpus Juris Civilis*), Chinese laws, and Indian laws. Yet none of these laws was founded, unlike Islamic *fiqh*, on the science of fundamentals, this science that was 'invented by the Muslims for the first time, which we do not find among the Greeks and the Romans in the West, nor among the Babylonians, in China, India, Persia, Egypt nor the Orient, or anywhere else'.¹⁰

In order to appreciate the importance of this science in relation to our subject – the critique of Arab reason (*ʿaql*) – it is sufficient here to allude to its methodological and epistemological character, seeing that it constitutes 'the rules invoked in order to derive the rulings of the *sharīʿah* from

evidences',¹¹ and this is to *fiqh* as logic is to philosophy.¹² If we add to this what we have noted before, that *fiqh* occupies the same place in Arab-Islamic culture as that of philosophy in Greek culture, in terms of quantity and quality, then, it becomes admissible to say that if the task of *fiqh* is to make laws for society, then the task of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* is to make laws for the reason (*ʿaql*), not just for *fiqh* reasoning alone but also for Arab reason as it was itself constituted and its activities practised in Arab culture. Yet, this does not mean that we wish to make the method of the *fuqahā*³ predominate over other methods. But, rather, we intend to stress henceforth, and this will become clear later, that the way Arab reason (*ʿaql*) operates – whether in *fiqh* or syntax or theology – is the same, persisting with the same instruments and mechanisms utilised by that of the *fuqahā*³. And this is not simply due to the fact that 'the science of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* consists of adopted laws from other sciences . . . because the *uṣūlīyīn* [scholars of the *uṣūl*] gathered together from several sciences what served their purposes and pertained to their researches, and hence they composed it and turned it into a science':¹³ but also, since this science – the *uṣūl al-fiqh* – was borrowed, after becoming a well-developed and codified method, by these several sciences which were intrinsic to its origin.

Without underestimating the significance of the contributions of the *uṣūlīyīn* who came after al-Shāfiʿī in making this science productive and systematising it, the rules composed by the author of *Al-Risālah fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (*The Treatise on the Fundamentals of Fiqh*) remain tantamount to the foundation and the general framework of this methodological science. The 'rules' posited by al-Shāfiʿī are no less important in forming Arab-Islamic reason (*ʿaql*) than the 'rules of methodology' posited by Descartes about the formation of French reason, and especially modern European rationalism in general.¹⁴ Let us, then, introduce the rules that established what we could possibly call 'Arab-Islamic rationalism', and begin explaining the intellectual circumstances that dictated and created it: that is, the rules codifying opinion, and legitimising reason (*ʿaql*).

If we were to consider Arab-Islamic thought at its inception and the way its issues and trends crystallised at the beginning of the Era of Codification, we would have found it tending towards being divided into two principal trends: one adhering to inherited Islam and calling for its adoption as a sole source for judgments, and another holding to opinion and considering it as the guiding principle to be followed, whether in regard to new rulings or assessing 'inherited Islam' itself. Therefore, there are two trends in *tafsīr* (exegesis): one of them resorts to interpretation through '*athar*' or Prophetic traditions, namely what was transmitted from

the Prophet and his Companions (*ṣaḥābah*); and the other relies on opinion (*raʿy*) in interpretation, namely through *ijtihād* or interpretation in the perception of Qurʾānic discourse in the light of the rules of reason bound by the rules of language and styles of Arabic expression, and guided by circumstances of and causes for revelation (*asbāb al-tanzīl*). Just as in the case of modern interpretation where we find those who accept all the *ḥadīth* transmitted about the Prophet and who do not venture to question their veracity, perhaps because they cannot conceive of any person being able to lie about the Messenger of God, there are, contrary to this, those who make numerous stipulations about accepting the *ḥadīth* based on the logic of opinion, who reserve doubt and commend examination. The same can be found in the sections on language and syntax: one group adopts narratives and hearing and is located in Kūfah and Baghdad, and another group adopts opinion and analogy and is located in Basra. Yet, we ought not accord a great deal of importance to this geographical division. The ‘people of opinion’ (*ahl al-raʿy*) in *fiqh* were located in Kūfah itself, whereas Basra was not devoid of ‘people of the *ḥadīth*’ (*ahl al-ḥadīth*, or traditionalists par excellence) who were located in Medina. On the other hand, we should not interpret this conflict, whether within one science or another, as being outside the context of its reality: the conflict was not always between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ nor was it between the ‘constant’ and the ‘variable’, rather, it was a struggle between different viewpoints, where the old and the new, the constant and the variable always intertwined,¹⁵ so that we find the same scholar adopting ‘opinion’ in one field and the ‘transmitted’ or ‘tradition’ in another. For instance, Abū Ḥanīfah, founder of the school of thought of opinion (*al-raʿy*) in Islamic *sharīʿah*, was Sunni in terms of creed (as opposed to al-Muʿtazilite), while al-Nazzām, who was a leading Muʿtazilite and pioneer in applying reason in the field of creed, was against opinion and analogy (*qiyās*) as well as consensus (*ijmāʿ*) in Islamic *sharīʿah*.

The struggle, then, was not between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ in *fiqh*, syntax, or theology at all, but was between different perspectives that did not invoke the same principles and hypotheses in their interpretations or their treatment of the old and the new simultaneously. In other words, this disagreement of perspectives, which accompanied the establishment of the Arab-Islamic sciences beginning with the Era of Codification, reflected in essence and reality a ‘crisis of fundamentals’. There was an urgent need for Arab-Islamic science to be re-established logically and epistemologically, after being established *practically* through ‘the codification and classification of knowledge’. As ‘classification’ became insufficient, it began

to pose problems which demanded not only its reconsideration but also exactitude and its anchoring in clear and solid principles and hypotheses.

Even though this ‘crisis of fundamentals’ had emerged, in all Arab-Islamic sciences and almost simultaneously, the degree of its intensity was not alike. The conflict in theology was still directed towards resisting attacks from outside Islam, particularly Manichaeism. Therefore, resolving the problematic of ‘fundamentals’ had been relatively delayed to a later stage when the infidels were eliminated and the crisis had shifted to become one within Islam itself. Thus Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī was put in a position to carry out the process of establishing linguistics; whereas in syntax, the inner struggle did not touch upon religion directly, neither creed nor *sharī‘ah*, rather, it enriched them with the possibilities it provided to comprehend and interpret religious text (i.e., interpretation from within the scope of Arabic and the pre-Islamic milieu, and not from outside). Therefore, there was no urgency to accelerate the process of ‘imposing order’ with requisite decisiveness in this field, which was shared by the people of Kūfah and the people of Basra in terms of the fundamentals they posited. As for the field of Islamic *sharī‘ah*, it was completely different, not in terms of the intensity of the struggle, but in terms of the seriousness of the outcomes stemming from it when it persisted between the people of opinion (*ahl al-ra‘y*) and the people of the *ḥadīth*, and thus relations were severed when they were separated. The *ḥadīth* corpus was becoming inflated under the pressure of the need to cover all new queries realistically, which were enhancing theoretical hypotheses and justifying them. ‘Opinion’ was itself swelling – if this expression is permissible – by going too far with these theoretical hypotheses, and most of the time, by turning away from drawing upon the texts and the line of conduct of the *salaf* (the [pious] ancestors) in favour of the application of pure mental ‘discretion’ (in legal matters). Thus, it was inevitable that the research be founded upon bases or rules, abided by everyone, putting a limit on the positing of *ḥadīth* and constraining opinion to particular boundaries. Indeed, this was the task undertaken by Muḥammad bin Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī al-Muṭṭalibī (AH 150–204).

It is not our objective to discuss whether this struggle about the ‘*uṣūl*’ in the field of legislation had socio-political dimensions. All that we intend to emphasise is that the development attained by Arab reason in the field of Islamic *sharī‘ah* reached a point where it became essential to achieve a resolution of this matter of ‘*uṣūl*’ (fundamentals), in one way or another. Al-Shāfi‘ī, who experienced this struggle intimately by living among the *ahl al-ḥadīth* in Medina and borrowing from them by frequenting Iraq and becoming an apprentice to instructors of *fiqh*, coming into close contact

with them and arguing with them, endeavoured to determine these fundamental *uṣūl* and codify opinion, as he was one whose mind sought to impose order on everything. Whether al-Shāfi‘ī benefited from medicine and astrology, with which he is said to have been familiar, or whether it was due to his inclination towards order or because of something else, what is unquestionable is that the founder of the science of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* who owed much to linguistics and scholars of syntax from whom he learned and with whom he argued during his youth and old age, who also were serious in their intent to codify the language and syntax, starting with conspicuous and fundamental ‘*uṣūl*’ – especially al-Khalīl and Sībawayh – was capable of closing up the linguistic order decisively in a way that did not admit anything new except that which already had a source (*aṣl*) within this order.

Al-Shāfi‘ī was, during his youth, contemporaneous with al-Khalīl, who was the founder of prosody, that is, the metrics of Arab poetry, and the collector of language on the basis of a pattern, the substantive characteristics of which we explained in the previous chapter. Al-Shāfi‘ī was also contemporaneous with al-Khalīl’s disciple, Sībawayh, author of the book ‘*al-Kitāb*’ (*the Book*), who collected the grammar of Arabic language and established its fundamentals in a decisive order that still preserves its rigidity to this day, stubbornly resisting any change. Whether or not al-Shāfi‘ī was inspired in his project by the works of al-Khalīl or that of Sībawayh, that which cannot be neglected or ignored is the impact of the methodology of the linguistics and scholars of syntax on al-Shāfi‘ī’s ‘*Risālah*’ in form and in substance. Had we known that al-Shāfi‘ī did not call his book ‘*al-Risālah*’, but rather ‘*al-Kitāb*’,¹⁶ we could have realised immediately the kind of relationship that persists between the project of al-Shāfi‘ī and that of Sībawayh, author of ‘*al-Kitāb*’: thus, the former is a book on syntax, while the latter deals with jurisprudence. Al-Khalīl had codified *siḥr al-bayān* ‘the magic of eloquence/explanation’ in terms of pronunciation and rhythm, while Sībawayh codified it in terms of utterances (*alfāẓ*) and conjugation patterns (*awzān*). As such, al-Shāfi‘ī began ‘*al-Risālah*’ by explaining ‘*kayf al-bayān*’ (‘the means of explanation’/‘what is rhetoric’): Arabic rhetoric had been codified in terms of inflection (*al-mabnā*) on one hand (syntax,) and denotation of meaning (*al-ma‘nā*) on the other (lexicons of the language). Subsequently, why is it not codified in terms of the relationship between inflection and denotation, within the primary religious text, as this would be a sure path for delimiting ‘chaos’ that pervades in the field of legislation (*al-tashrī‘*), the chaos of ‘inflation’ in *ḥadīth* and opinion alike?

It is useless, then, to look for the referential authority adopted by al-Shāfi'ī in his work in Greek logic or in medicine and astrology. The book *al-Risālah* itself points to the referential authority indicating it in its first pages. The issue here pertains essentially to working within the sphere of 'Arabic rhetoric' (*al-bayān al-'arabī*) and not outside it. Accordingly, the first step is to ask what rhetoric is (*kayf al-bayān*). Al-Shāfi'ī responds:

Al-bayān is a word containing several meanings of words of collective roots but diverse branches. The least that can be said about these shared and diverse meanings is that they are proclamations [or clarifications: *bayān*] to the one who has been addressed with these words by one in whose tongue the Qur'ān had been revealed, [i.e., in Arabic] at close to the same level, even if some words were more rhetorically precise than others, and different for those who are ignorant of the Arab tongue. (p. 21)

What was meant by '*al-bayān*' is the Qur'ānic rhetorical discourse revealed with the language of Arabs and through its methods of expression and enunciation. And the purpose is codifying it, namely, determining the relation between inflection/utterance and denotation in it, starting with *bayān* as consisting of roots and branches, where the relation between roots and branches is governed by knowledge of Arabic language, and the confusion about this relation and its bifurcation occurs 'when one is ignorant of the Arab tongue', whereas the scope of interest is limited to the sphere of Islamic *sharī'ah*, excluding the creed, even if the impact of the challenges extracted from the Qur'ānic discourse applies to both.

Afterwards, al-Shāfi'ī commences with the enumeration and determination of the aspects of the *bayān* in Qur'ānic discourse and limits it to five. First, there is what Allāh has clarified for his creatures through scripture/text (*naṣṣ*), which does not require interpretation or elucidation because it is clear in itself. Second, there is that which Allāh has made clear to his creatures through scripture but which requires a sort of supplement or additional clarification, which was accomplished by the prophetic *sunnah*. Third, there are the operative ordinances (*aḥkām*) of Allāh revealed in the Qur'ān, the modality of which were explicated through the tongue of his Prophet. Fourth, there is that about which the Qur'ān has remained silent but for which the Prophet provided elucidation, and thus attaining to the same force of the previous aspects as Allāh imposed obedience to his Prophet. Fifth and last, there is what Allāh imposed on his creatures in the way of *ijtihād* (reasoning) in seeking it, and their path to that is to seek knowledge in the Arabic language and its modes of expression and

the constructing of opinion based on analogy: analogy in that for which there has not been transmitted a text and for which there is no report of a ‘precedent’ governed by the scripture, by a report from the *sunnaḥ* or consensus (*ijmāʿ*). Hence, as a general law, codifier of opinion and limiter of the scope of its movement, al-Shāfiʿī says: ‘No person is ever allowed to say if anything is permitted [*ḥalāl*] or forbidden [*ḥarām*] except from the standpoint of knowledge. And the modality of knowledge is: the report from the Book or the *sunnaḥ*, or consensus [*ijmāʿ*], or analogy [*qiyās*].’ (p. 39)

Thence, al-Shāfiʿī identified four roots or fundamental *uṣūl* of *fiqh* or *tashrīʿ*, combining the *uṣūl* of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and the *uṣūl* of the *ahl al-raʾy*, on the basis of deciding between two methodological issues: the limits and conditions of opinion (analogy – *qiyās*) on one hand, and the relationship between utterance and denotation within Qurʾānic perspicuity (*al-bayān al-qurʾānī*) on the other.

Concerning opinion, it has to be nothing other than analogy: ‘And analogy is what is required by evidence that is in agreement with some respects with a previous report from the scripture or the *sunnaḥ*’, and agreement – between the root and the branch – either by their association in one meaning or in the existence of some sort of similarity between them (p. 40), and in all cases: ‘no person analogises unless he possess the instrument for analogy, which is knowledge of the ordinances in God’s scripture, i.e. impositions, morals, [its] abrogating [verses] (*nāsikh*) and abrogated (*mansūkh*) its general and particular ordinances and guidance . . . And no person analogises unless he is entirely of what has come before including the *sunnaḥ* and declarations of the pious ancestors (*salaf*) and consensus and disagreement among people and tongue of the Arab.’ (pp. 509–510). Discretion (*istiḥsān*), on the other hand, was employed by *ahl al-raʾy*, out of necessity or exigency, inadmissible, because ‘if it were admissible to disengage analogy it would be admissible for the *ahl al-ʿuqūl* [people possessed of intellects] outside the sphere of the people of knowledge [*ahl al-ḥadīth*, etc.] to make suppositions concerning things for which no report [of a precedent] is available on the basis of their discretion – *istiḥsān*, and to say anything without a report or analogy is inadmissible’ (p. 505). Furthermore: ‘None is to assert anything on the basis of *istiḥsān* as assertion on the basis of discretion is something which is innovated and not on the basis of a precedent’ (p. 25). And when there is no doubt that there must be a ‘precedent’ confirmed by a report (from the Qurʾān or *sunnaḥ*), it is inadmissible to act upon ‘transmitted interests’ (*maṣāliḥ mursalah*) or ‘*istiṣlāḥ*’ (‘public good’) – which were employed by Imam

Mālik, leader of the school of *ahl al-ḥadīth*¹⁷ . . . Thus, al-Shāfi'ī re-appropriated from Abū Ḥanīfah that upon which he had based opinion (*istiḥsān*) and from Mālik what was for him equal to the *ḥadīth* in the case of the absence of the latter (*maṣāliḥ mursalah*), therefore al-Shāfi'ī had planned to bring back everything to the scripture and the *sunnah* through analogy.¹⁸

Concerning the relationship between utterance (*al-lafẓ*) and meaning (*al-ma'nā*) in the Arabic *bayān*, al-Shāfi'ī delimits it as follows when he asserts:

In His Book, Allāh addressed the Arabs in their tongue according to what they knew of its meanings, and what they knew of its denotations is: the comprehensiveness of its tongue, for its innate nature is to speak of something generally and manifestly intending by it the general and apparent [meaning]; and through the former dispensing with the latter; and, to speak generally and manifestly implying for the general including the particular thus deducing the latter with some indications of it from what was told, or to speak generally and manifestly intending the particular/specific, and to speak manifestly in a context insinuating what is not apparent. All this appears at the beginning or in the middle or at the end of a discourse; and, Arabs speak in an elliptical manner that reveals the beginning from the end of their discourse, and start speaking in a way revealing the end of their utterance from its start; and they speak of something for which they know its denotation without uttering clarification, as they identify indication, then this becomes the higher level of their expression due to the unique acquaintance of *ahl al-'ilm* [lit. people of knowledge] of the Arabic language in comparison to the *ahl al-jahl* [lit., the people of ignorance] of it. Moreover, it names the same thing by several names, and indicates by the same name multiple significances (pp. 51–52).

As such, *ijtihād* is basically the act of comprehending religious text inside its scope of discussion. Thus, solutions must be sought from within and through it as a means (*bi-wāsiṭatih*), and analogy is not absolute opinion, but is 'what is demanded by evidence to agree with a previous report [*khābar*] from the scripture or the *sunnah*'. Accordingly, for analogy to exist, there must be information (namely a text – *naṣṣ*) from the scripture or *sunnah* to be taken as an original source principle (*aṣl*) and evidence, and there must be correspondence, in terms of meaning or similarity, between the branch the new case in which a judgment is required, and the original case root source (*farʿ*) [deriving from the source principle (*aṣl*)] that is. Indeed, *fiqh* and analogy consist of two instruments of the intel-

lect that aim at linking one branch to another and not to establish a world of thought issuing from principles.¹⁹ As such, the *Lebensraum* of these instruments of the intellect resides in the text. As a result of this, the substance of thought was restricted, almost, to ‘exploiting’ the text. In the expression of the *uṣūliyyūn*: ‘the cultivation (*al-istithmār*) of the legal rulings from the utterances’. Hereupon as well, the *fiqh* research of the scholars of the *uṣūl* proceeded from linguistic presuppositions to explore utterances and their forms, semantic indications and their similitudes. And these researches depended almost entirely on the Qur’ānic scripture alone as a field of research, for induction and derivation.

All the above might be seen as almost all of what al-Shāfi‘ī brought in terms of rules, over and above various and many examples from the Qur’ān, elucidating these rules unequivocally and unambiguously, especially if one had learned the Qur’ān by heart or by assimilation. Nevertheless, the importance of al-Shāfi‘ī’s principles is not due to their number, nor even to their lucidity or ambiguity, but rather their real importance emanates from the epistemological directive they actually corroborated, which governed Arab reason for many centuries, and which still has its deep effect even today. Al-Shāfi‘ī oriented Arab reason horizontally towards linking one piece to another, the branch to the root source (analogy), and vertically towards associating one utterance with multiple types of meanings, one connotation with several types of utterance within *fiqh* studies, exactly as is the case with linguistic and theological studies. Thus, Arab reason found sufficient material to satisfy its curiosity by moving in between those two axes, and it was, and continues to be, a mind of *fiqh* reasoning, namely, a reason with a genius almost limited to finding an original source (*aṣl*) for every branch and, subsequently, for every ‘new’ an ‘old’ precedent by which to analogise – by depending basically on the texts, until the text became the essential referential authority of Arab reason and its acts. Clearly, a reason in such condition cannot produce except (derivatively) through other extant products. Is there any need to confirm this phenomenon with examples of the ‘ancient’ and the ‘modern’ in Arab thought?

To avoid mistakes in our research, we will limit ourselves to reiterating again the idea that if the task of *fiqh* is to make laws for *society*, then the task of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* – the root fundamentals of law – is to make laws for *reason*. And regardless of whether *fiqh* acted upon making laws for social reality – the lived and practical one – or whether it was driven to far-reaching hypothetical theories beyond realisation, leaving social reality to make laws to itself through customs and habits, the incontrovertible

point is that al-Shāfi‘ī was – in fact – the greatest legitimator of Arab reason. ‘Opinion’ (independent judgement) before him – with Abū Ḥanīfah in particular – was free and loose, and he set bounds for it, as we have seen, with conditions that made the distance between his followers and those who follow *athar* (tradition) as narrow as possible, but even more, the latter outweighed the former, since the practice of the first depended on that of the second: and in order to realise the extent to which ‘opinion’ was free with Abū Ḥanīfah, we will exhibit two or three examples of many related about him, citing him relying on opinion – even reason – with no limits or boundaries.

Stories tell that a man asked Abū Ḥanīfah about something, and he responded, but the man objected saying: ‘It has been said about the Prophet such and such,’ then Abū Ḥanīfah replied: ‘Enough of that,’ which means to say that the truth for him is what his reason had indicated and not what was told about or ascribed to the Prophet. Someone related to him a prophetic *ḥadīth*, the text of which was: ‘The two parties to a sale [*al-bayyi‘ān*] have the choice if they have not separated’, namely, that the buyer and the seller can always retract the transaction if one of them requests it, under the condition that they are still in the same place where the business deal was contracted. Abū Ḥanīfah objected saying: ‘What would you conclude if they were in a ship? Have you considered what the outcome would be if they were in jail? Or, if they were travelling?’, meaning that there could be circumstances forcing the two parties not to separate, and therefore he delivered a legal opinion (*fatwā*) that ‘if there must be a sale, then there is no choice’, namely if it fulfils its legal requirements, there is no retraction whether the buyer and the seller have been separated or remained in place.

As for expedience (*ḥiyal*) in *fiqh*, Abū Ḥanīfah knew how to seek solutions to problems a person may have *vis-à-vis sharī‘ah* rulings because of special circumstances. For instance, a man had sworn to engage in conjugal relations with his wife during the day, and it was Ramaḍān, so he had thereby implicated himself in a double conundrum: his swearing on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the invalidation of fasting during Ramaḍān if a sexual relation were conducted – with the consequences such an act can invite, as breaking the fast would be deliberate. So Abū Ḥanīfah gave a *fatwā* that the man in question should *travel* with his wife so that breaking the fast might become religiously lawful, and thus he might engage in intercourse during the daylight hours.

Here with Abū Ḥanīfah, and with the people of ‘opinion’ in general, the *‘aql* (reason) was the legitimator/legislator (*al-musharri‘*); Abū Ḥanīfah

was to the *sharī'ah* what the Mu'tazilites were to creed. As for al-Shāfi'ī it was *ʿaql* (reason) that was legitimated/legislated for (*al-musharraʿ lah*). And when we know that the rules of al-Shāfi'ī were adopted (with some relative differences) by all schools of *fiqh* (except for some Shī'ites and Zāhirites who denied resort to analogical reasoning (*al-qiyās*)), we will realise the importance that should be accorded to the dicta of al-Shāfi'ī in the study of the formative elements of Arab reason (*ʿaql*) and its directives. Undoubtedly, this importance will increase indefinitely, in the eye of the researcher, if he takes into account this broad and deep intertwining between different branches of Arab-Islamic culture, if he notes that the rules put down by al-Shāfi'ī were adopted by scholars of syntax and theologians after having adjusted them to the purposes of their research. It is the unity of methodology (analogy) in Arab-Islamic sciences that was imposed by the unity of the subject (the text), of which we will discuss the details below. Here, we will limit ourselves to pursuing the influence of his rules on the way Arab reason treated the most important issue in its history: the question of the *khilāfah* (lit., the succession to the Prophet – i.e., the caliphate).

Political Discourse and Political Succession

are many things that attract attention in Arab-Islamic culture and its movement; in other words, there are many gaps in our understanding of the reality of this culture, our perception of its development and progress and the relation of its sections to each other. Of these issues or gaps is the paradox that we may formulate as such: while the question of the *khilāfah* (caliphate) was the first to be raised in Arab-Islamic thought, it was the last issue about which this thought attempted to theorise, knowing that the debate on this issue began earlier, and that it was the starting point on which theology was founded, the most excessive Arab-Islamic science in theorising and debate.

Perhaps political factors might have had a certain role in this matter, at the forefront of which is power and its authoritarian nature in Islam, even in the Middle Ages. Still politics does not prohibit all kinds of debates, only one kind, namely that which opposes it. Therefore, political factors, or authoritarianism, did not prohibit debating the question of the *khilāfah* or succession, at least in the sense of justifying reality and legitimising it – whether intellectual or religious. And this is what actually occurred, but after at least two centuries had elapsed since this problem had initially

emerged: the problem of succession. Why, then, was the debate on the problem of succession delayed, even though it was the point of departure of theoretical research in the creed?

This is a question that can be answered through observing the development of the epistemological order in Arab-Islamic thought. The debate on the question of *khilāfah* and the 'passing of laws' for the sake of rule required the existence of 'rules' for thinking, capable of justifying reality and codifying it, by bestowing legitimacy upon it. And these founding principles were not made available to Arab thought, except with al-Shāfi'ī. Consequently, it was not a coincidence that Sunni thought 'failed' to conceptualise the question of the *khilāfah* for long, until the 'methodological rules' became firmly established by al-Shāfi'ī, and the discussion of this issue became a 'religious duty' for every author, whether a theologian or a jurist. And in order to realise the importance of the role played by the 'rules' set down by al-Shāfi'ī in the formulation of the Sunni theory of succession, and thus in the epistemological foundation of this theory, we must compare, however rapidly, Sunni 'discourse' on succession before al-Shāfi'ī and afterwards.

That the Sunnis had an opinion in the problem of *khilāfah* since it was raised, is indisputable. Is it not the case that the problem of *khilāfah* was the fundamental reason for the split of Muslims into groups: Shī'ites, Marjī'ites and Khārijites and so forth? Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to attribute one particular opinion to those who were neither Shī'ites nor Khārijites and who are considered to be part of the so-called '*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*' (people of the *sunnah* [i.e., the normative praxis of the Prophet] and the group, or Sunnis). Among these were some who opposed the rule of the Umayyads and others who supported it. Whether they did so silently or through pragmatic and open positions, the one thing that characterised them all was their recognition of the legitimacy of all the first four caliphs, while the Shī'ites challenged the succession of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, and argued that the Prophet specified the succession of 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib after him. We must exclude the Zaydī Shī'iah who accepted the leadership of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, despite their belief in 'Alī's precedence since he was more entitled to the *khilāfah* than either of them. As for the Khārijites, it is widely known that they recognised the legitimacy of the four caliphs until they rebelled against 'Alī's leadership as a result of the 'arbitration' (to which 'Alī consented at the battle of Ṣiffīn in AH 39). It even seems that the Khārijites were the first to have a lucid position on the issue of succession, although this stance never did attain the level of a theory.

Nonetheless, what really draws attention is that theorisation over the matter of succession, whether by Shī‘ites or by Sunnis, did not begin until many centuries after the rise of the problem of governance in Islam. The theorising for this problem began in approximately the mid-second century AH, namely with the beginning of the Era of Codification, and the Shī‘ites were the first to initiate this.²⁰

Indeed, the Shī‘ah initiated the ‘discourse’ on the imamate before the Sunnis, rendering their posture one of self-defence. And since the state of Islam at that time – in the mid-second century – was the state of the Sunnis and not that of the Shī‘ah, and since the Shī‘ites had abandoned by then, with (their Sixth Imam) Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, violent opposition and had resorted to the tactics of appeasement, they called into question the ‘politics of the past’ as a means to challenge the politics of the ‘present’, the matter which would cause the Sunni supporters of the state of the ‘present’ to respond to the Shī‘ite questioning of the ‘politics of the past’, thus sharing with them politics of the past for the sake of the present. It is a remarkable paradox that the Shī‘ites, who founded their theory of the imamate on the basis of the ‘text – *al-naṣṣ*’, or ‘[the specification in] the will – *al-waṣīyah* [of the Prophet]’, adopted ‘opinion’ to prove that succession must be mentioned in the text, considering its importance and seriousness, and that it is ‘not *reasonable*’ that the Prophet would have left this issue of who would succeed him until after his passing and to chaos and that he did not designate anyone. As for the Sunnis, who did not avail themselves yet of the ‘fundamentals’ of methodology and a theory of ‘discourse’ in this matter, they followed the line of *ahl al-ḥadīth* in opposing the Shī‘ite theory. Accordingly, they resorted to history to prove that succession occurred through ‘choice’ and *not* the *text*; for them, history is ‘*sīrat al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*’ (the ‘line of conduct of the pious ancestor’), which serves as a subsidiary to the text when this latter is absent. While the Shī‘ites resorted to ‘opinion’ to prove the necessity of the ‘text’, the Sunnis) adopted *al-athar* (‘tradition’) – which for them serves as a subsidiary to the text – to prove the necessity of ‘choice’, that is, *opinion*.

Perhaps the oldest Sunni book to have reached us about this subject is *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* (*The Imamate and Politics*), attributed to the great and erudite Sunni historian and author Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullah bin Muslim bin Qutaybah al-Daynūrī (AH 213–276). And, despite doubts about the authenticity of attributing the book to Ibn Qutaybah, and despite the shortcoming and errors noted by specialist researchers,²¹ it remains nonetheless the first Sunni attempt to debate the imamate according to the methodology of the early Sunnis: the methodology of *riwāyah* (narration)

and *isnād* (the supporting chain of transmitters in *ḥadīth* literature) and the expression of opinion through the exposition of ‘factual events’. In addition to the fact that the book is in itself directed towards the logic of responding to Shī‘ites, at the same time, it reflects the position of the Sunnis concerning the status of the *ahl al-khilāfah* (lit., the people of succession – of the caliphate) at the time of Mu‘tazilah.

In fact, what draws our attention to the book, in addition to its methodology in political expression, is its introduction and conclusion. The author of *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* remains completely silent about the time of the Prophet, and begins directly narrating stories that highlight the ‘precedence of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar’,²² and then continues to present accounts and stories about the caliphs, from Abū Bakr to Hārūn al-Rashīd. The author concludes by saying:

What we have begun was completed with the assistance of God almighty, and complete is the description of what we have recounted since the days of our caliphs and the best of imams, and the strife at their time and wars of their days, concluding with the days of al-Rashīd and which stopped at the time when his state came to an end, as it was useless and lacking of any interest to narrate stories after his time, and to recount any discussion between them and what was of their time. That is, when their matter came to an end and their domains were overtaken by inexperienced persons who were prevailed over by the heretics of Iraq, who drove them to madness and they led them to unbelief, thus they had no need for ‘*ulamā*’ and *sunnah* [traditions], and they became engrossed in pleasures and abandoned their opinion.²³

It is evident from the text that the author is an ardent Sunni, and what he meant by ‘heretics of Iraq’ were the Mu‘tazilah. It is also evident from the context that the book had been written after the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd and before the Sunni coup that took place during the rule of al-Mutawakkil who ‘commended abandoning theory and discussion of the controversy and abandoning what was the practise of people during the days of al-Mu‘taṣim and al-Wāthiq, and who commanded people to follow tradition and ordered sheikhs of the *ḥadīth* to relate the traditions, and to emphasise the *sunnah* and group sentiment [*sunnah wa jamā‘ah*]’.²⁴ Al-Mutawakkil had assumed the caliphate in the year AH 232, and therefore the book was written before that date and after the year AH 193, the year in which Hārūn al-Rashīd died.²⁵

We have noted previously that the book begins by highlighting the ‘precedence of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar’ and we have to add now that this

starting point includes also ‘the appointing by the Prophet of Abū Bakr to succeed him . . . and a mention of the *saqīfah* [i.e., that is the bower of *banī Sā‘idah* where ‘Umar swore the *bay‘ah* to Abū Bakr] and what occurred there’. During the period of his illness, the Prophet had entrusted Abū Bakr with leading prayer for the people on his behalf. The story, as recounted by the author of *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, insists on according this delegation (of responsibility) as having a special significance before the attempts of ‘Ā’ishah to make this ‘delegation – *al-taklīf*’ pass to ‘Umar, and the determination of the Prophet to appoint Abū Bakr in particular. According to the logic of the story, as long as the Prophet had decided, with persistence, that Abū Bakr should be the one to lead the prayer on his behalf, where the prayer is the ‘lesser imamate’ (*al-imāmah al-ṣughrā*), implies that he was indicating to his followers that they ought to consider him as successor, that is, the caliph of the ‘great imamate’ (*al-imāmah al-kubrā*). The implication is that this was a precedent that ought to be adopted as though it were a text (*naṣṣ*).

Indeed, this precedent and many others have been cited in regard to the gathering of *saqīfat banī Sā‘idah*, this famous meeting point where the question of succession after the Prophet was settled. The debate, even the conflict, resulted eventually in the pledge of the *bay‘ah* (allegiance) to Abū Bakr. As a matter of fact, this is the only historical information, that is not subject to question when it comes to this meeting, while everything else, including events, statements, speeches and other factors related to the story of allegiance to the caliphate of Abū Bakr cannot but be questioned. The facts narrated by the author of *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* and retold by him or by any other in subsequent history books, which provide us with details of what happened in the meeting and the ‘text’ of the words spoken as if recorded by a tape recorder, cannot be trusted as it is. The ‘fabrication’ that seeped into the prophetic *ḥadīth* for political motives must have certainly poured forcefully into the stories that were transmitted orally and for over two centuries, stories about what occurred in the past, especially those pertaining to political circumstances.

And if this is the case, then there is nothing that prevents us from postulating the intrusiveness of political factors that were influential during the Era of Codification, during the reformulation of the ‘minutes’ of the debates about the meeting at the *saqīfah* of *banī Sā‘idah*. There is no doubt that the reply to the assertions of the Shī‘ites concerning the question of the imamate was one of the most important factors that rendered these ‘minutes’ present matters in a way which made it believable that the succession – the caliphate of Abū Bakr – had been resolved through choice, with the

consensus of the Companions (*ijmāʿ al-ṣahābah*), and that the debates covered everything, even the possibility of: ‘an emir from among us [immigrant Meccans – i.e., the *muhājirūn*] and an emir from among you [Medinese]’, and that no person had mentioned or referred to the delegation (of responsibility by the Prophet to lead the prayer). Only the ‘Islamic precedents’ put an end to the situation: in addition to the fact that Abū Bakr was among the *muhājirūn* (immigrants), who had seniority (over the Medinese) in Islam, yet the Prophet had appointed him as successor to pray on his behalf on the basis of his being his companion – ‘the second of two’ in the cave of Ḥarāʾ.²⁶

If we have determined that the Sunnis were the last who ‘debated’ the ‘imamate and politics’, and that they drew upon in their debates, at first, justifying the historical events, which called into question Shīʿite legitimacy, using the same style of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, the mode of narration and *isnād* (chains of transmitters), we have become capable of asserting that, for the Sunnis, *theorising* for rule had not yet begun. And it would not begin until after al-Shāfiʿī was deceased in the year AH 204.

Why? Because al-Shāfiʿī, founder of the *uṣūl al-fiqh*, or ‘the rules of methodology’ for Sunni thought, identified the fundamental sources as four: the Book (i.e., the Qurʾān), the *sunnah* (i.e., the compendia of *ḥadīth*), consensus (*ijmāʿ*) and analogy (*qiyās*). And with regard to the issue of succession – the caliphate, consensus and analogy – in the absence of the text, whether of the Book (Qurʾān) or *sunnah* – become the two fundamentals employed to establish the Sunni theory of the *khilāfah*. Thus, the past would attain the power of law, and the justification of present events would derive from the interpretation of past events, and therefore, the process of restructuring the past would become a vital necessity. Hence, in order for the Sunni *mutakallimūn* (theologians) and *fuqahāʾ* to prove that the imamate is decided by *choice* and not through the text, it would not be sufficient for them to narrate ‘historical’ events as the author of *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* had done, but they would be obliged to resort to citing ‘consensus’ – the unanimous consensus of the companions (*ṣahābah*) over the pledge of allegiance to Abū Bakr, and their acceptance through ‘consensus’ of his appointment of ʿUmar bin al-Khaṭṭāb as a caliph to succeed him; they would resort to analogy, in matters of succession, with matters of *sharīʿah*, and therefore analogising the present with the past; even *ijtihād* in *fiqh* – which al-Shāfiʿī rendered an analog of analogy – would become the key to solving the problem of all locked doors, including the conduct of the Companions of the Prophet and their political positions.

We will limit ourselves to one, instructive example.

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (AH 260–324) was the first Sunni *mutakallim* (theologian) on the imamate, in the sense of what ‘dialectical theology’ (*al-kalām*) connoted in his time, namely as a discourse based on fundamental sources and precedents, posited or derived from Islamic law (*sharī‘ah*) in one way or another. And the opinions of al-Ash‘arī are of a special importance to our subject, not only because they constituted the fundamentals upon which Sunnis founded their theory of the caliphate, but also because they limited the task of dialectical theology in regard to the imamate to legitimising the past, which made Sunni political thought a prisoner of this past-orientation which impels people to return perpetually to the conflicts of the past and to engage in them continuously.

Al-Ash‘arī attempted to prove the religious legitimacy of the imamate of the four ‘rightly-guided caliphs’ (*al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn*) by employing whatever possible of the four fundamentals as identified by al-Shāfi‘ī. As such, we see him resorting to the Qur’ān first, trying to interpret some verses in order to extract – somehow arbitrarily – some ‘indication’ that Abū Bakr was himself the successor (caliph) after the Prophet. Then we see him shifting immediately to *ḥadīth* to prove that the Prophet let it be known that after him there would be four caliphs. For this purpose, he refers to the *ḥadīth* which relates: ‘Amongst my people, the *khilāfah* [will be] for thirty years; afterwards, [there will be] a monarchy.’ Al-Ash‘arī adds what the narrator of this *ḥadīth* commends: ‘Hold fast to the caliphate of Abū Bakr and that of ‘Umar and that of ‘Uthmān then . . . hold fast to the caliphate of ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib . . . and then he said [i.e., the second narrator of the *ḥadīth*], and I found these to be thirty years.’

For al-Ash‘arī the Book and the *sunnah* did not suffice: he wanted to enlist all four fundamentals to validate the ‘policy of the past’ and its legitimacy, so he invokes the ‘consensus’ of the Companions of the Prophet over the pledge (*bay‘ah*) of allegiance to Abū Bakr, and replies to the opponents of the Sunnis in this matter: ‘And, if the imamate of al-Ṣiddīq [i.e., Abū Bakr] is proven, then the imamate of al-Fārūq [‘Umar] is proven, because that of al-Ṣiddīq was stipulated in the text, determined, and he was chosen [. . .] and the imamate of ‘Uthmān is proven [. . .] with the agreement of those who determined his imamate in the council of *shūrā* (*aṣḥāb al-shūrā*) [. . .] and the imamate of ‘Alī is proven [. . .] with the agreement of those who concluded it of the *‘ahl al-ḥal wa al-‘aqd*’ (the people of authority – lit., the people who bind and unbind [treaties]). Al-Ash‘arī does not forget the fourth fundamental source of Shāfi‘ī *fiqh*, which is *ijtihād*; and he asserts: ‘What happened between ‘Alī and

al-Zubayr and ‘Ā’ishah [i.e., the so-called Battle of the Camel] was the result of interpretation and *ijtihād*, and ‘Alī is the imam and they are all *ahl al-ijtihād* (people of independent judgement) [. . .], and what is told about our Imam ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah is the result of interpretation and *ijtihād* [independent reasoning].²⁷

Al-Ash‘arī laid the foundation for the Sunni theory of the caliphate, or rather he theorised their previous political positions based on the ‘fundamentals’ of al-Shāfi‘ī, rendering the debate in politics a legitimisation of the past, similar to the way in which al-Shāfi‘ī had rendered *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) in Islamic *sharī‘ah* a canonisation of *opinion*. As such, al-Ash‘arī – the author of *Ibānah (The Elucidation)* completed what al-Shāfi‘ī, the author of *al-Risālah*, failed to do. In fact, it was not a matter of failure but rather one of need and necessity: the need to legitimise the past had not been raised at the time of al-Shāfi‘ī with the same urgency that it had at the time of al-Ash‘arī. The opposition of the Shī‘ah at the time of al-Shāfi‘ī was weak, and a semi-truce had been agreed with ‘Abbāsīd authority. They had become a political power that threatened the caliphate seriously during the time of the authoring of al-Ash‘arī. They had acquired their own state (under the Fāṭimids in Egypt), and their influence was growing in some eastern provinces of the Sunni caliphal state. Moreover, they had completed the theorisation for their opinions in terms of creed and politics, and believed in the primacy of the text in the issue of the imamate as one of the pillars of religion, of no less importance or status than prayer (*ṣalāt*), alms (*zakāt*) and pilgrimage (*ḥajj*). In fact, assertion regarding the text had come to be backed by the political power of the sultan, in more than one place in the Islamic world, so there was no doubt about ‘setting up’ a Sunni imam by raising the creed of the Sunnis to the level of the new challenges, and thus Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī – ‘the imam of the *mutakallimūn*’ (theologians) in the expression of Ibn Khaldūn rose to the occasion – to accomplish this task.

This was another type of Sunni ‘response’ to the Shī‘ite ‘warning’. Yet is not the history of all the *madhāhib* (doctrinal schools of thought) and politics in general – expression of actions and reactions?

Notes

1. By the expression *al-tashrī‘ li-l-musharri‘* al-Jabri is referring here to the set of initiatives in the Islamic sphere, and especially in the arena of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), to establish and restrict the governing principles for use of the rational intellect or reason

(*al-ʿaql*) in derivation and determination of Islamic law (*al-sharīʿah*). With the codification of al-Shāfiʿī, the great jurist – among others – discovered the need for a critical device or apparatus. Up until roughly his time, *fiqh* only admitted three sources within the law: the Qurʾān, the *sunnah* as transmitted in the *ḥadīth* literature, and *ijmāʿ* or ‘consensus’ of the Prophet’s Companions and second-generation followers as well as that of the scholars, which had primarily a confirmatory role. At that time, apart from *ijmāʿ*, there was no critical device to resolve contradictions or disparity within transmitted tradition (*al-naql*) – especially in regard to the accounts of the *ḥadīth* – which with spurious additions were actually *expanding* in number over time as can be ascertained simply by a comparison of the *quantity* of *ḥadīth* known to al-Malik and those reported by Ibn Ḥanbal. Reason (*al-ʿaql*) had yet to be admitted as a legitimate device and means of resolving these issues or legitimising one ruling over another. Appeal to reason seemed the only way to reconcile sources which were sometimes patently contradictory, but, first, reason itself and recourse to it had to be *legitimised* – to be rendered Islamic-legal (i.e., *sharīʿ*) before it could serve as arbiter or legitimiser (*al-musharriʿ*). [Editor.]

2. See Orientalists’ positions and responses in this matter, in addition to a discussion on the relationship between Roman laws and Egyptian and Chaldean codes in: al-Dawālībī, Muḥammad Maʿrūf, *al-Wajīz fī al-Ḥuqūq al-Rūmānīyah wa Tārīkhīhā* (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat Jāmiʿat Dimashq, 1959), pp. 54 ff.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 42

4. See his article in the book *Turāth al-Islām*, ed. Thomas Arnold (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿah, 1972), p. 431.

5. Hamilton, Gibb, *Studies on the Civilisation of Islam*, trans. Iḥsān ʿAbbās and others (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm li-l-Malāyīn, 1964), p. 263.

6. Muṣṭafā, Al-Zarqāʿ, *al-Madkhal al-Fiqhī al-ʿĀm* (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat Jāmiʿat Dimashq, 1957), pp. 125–126.

7. Muḥammad bin Mūsā, Al-Khawārizmī, *Kitāb al-Jabr wa al-Muqābalah*, ʿAlī Muṣṭafā Musharrafah and Muḥammad Mūsā Aḥmad (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1968)

8. Al-Khawārizmī al-Kātib, Abū ʿAbdullah Muḥammad, *Mafātīḥ al-ʿUlūm* (Cairo: 1342 A.H.), p. 116.

9. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah* (Cairo: ʿAlī ʿAbdul Wāḥid Wāfī, 1960), vol. 3, p. 1096.

10. Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh, in the introduction that he wrote for the book *al-Muʿtamad fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh li-Abī al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī al-Muʿtazilī*, part II, p. 7. The introduction was written in French in the end of the book.

11. Muḥammad, Al-Khuḍarī, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Cairo: Matbaʿat al-Istiqāmah, 1938), p. 12.

12. See a discussion for this analogy in ‘Sharḥ Muslam al-Thubūt’ in al-Mustaṣfi’s book about *uṣūl al-fiqh* by al-Ghazālī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir transferred via offset from Bulāq’s edition in Cairo, AH 1322), p. 10.

13. Al-Khuḍarī, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 15.

14. Al-Rāzī compares al-Shāfiʿī, al-Khalīl and Aristotle: ‘I know for sure that the analogy of al-Shāfiʿī to *ʿilm al-uṣūl* resembles the analogy of Aristotle to Logic, and the analogy of al-Khalīl to *ʿilm al-ʿarūḍ*. People before the time of Aristotle used to perceive things according to their proper nature without having any rule for positing definitions and developing hypotheses, for this reason their own transactions were confused and unstable as a result of relying on nature rather than universal law. As Aristotle grasped this fact, he created logic so were poets before the time of al-Khalīl,

they used to write poems coming from their own nature, when he introduced *‘ilm al-‘arūḍ*. Al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *Manāqib al-Shāfi‘ī*, pp. 100 ff. It must be mentioned that among the most prominent doctors of the *madhab* of al-Shāfi‘ī in this regard are Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī

15. In the sense implemented by Adonis in his book of the same title. This implementation has nothing to do with the ‘structural analysis’ heralded by Adonis in the introduction of his own book. According to him, ‘the constant’ is ‘the old’ and ‘the variable’ is ‘the modern’, in fact, this analogy is not accurate in addition to being unsatisfactorily established in terms of its conclusions and interpretations.

16. See the introduction written by Professor Aḥmad Shākir to the version he edited of al-Shāfi‘ī’s *Risālah* (Cairo: al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1940), p. 12.

17. *Al-maṣāliḥ al-mursalah* are issues not addressed per se in Qur’ānic texts. Al-Ghazālī called them *al-istiṣlāḥ*.

18. The analysis of *fiqhī -naḥwī- kalāmī* syllogism shall be discussed in a later chapter.

19. Similar givens to previous note (number 17).

20. Ibn Nadīm states ‘the first to expound in the *madhab* of Imamah is ‘Alī bin Ismā‘īl ibn Maytham al-Ṭayyār and Maytham was a loyal friend to ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib. He wrote the books *al-Imāmah* and *al-Istiḥqāq*. Also he maintains that: ‘Hishām bin al-Ḥakam who was a friend to Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq was an eloquent Shī‘ite intellect who delved into the issues of *imāmah* and helped in refining the Shī‘ite *madhab*, he was very meticulous in *al-kalām*. He died in circa AH 135 and was a pupil of ‘Alī bin Ismā‘īl who died in AH 179.’

21. Muṣṭafā, Shākir, *al-Tārīkh al-‘Arabī wa al-Mu‘arrikhūn* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-Malāyīn, 1978), p. 240.

22. The book *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, also called *Tārīkh al-Khulafā’* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥalabī, 1963) pp. 1 ff.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

24. Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, [n.d.]), p. 369.

25. To maintain that the book belongs to Ibn Qutaybah will pose a problem that is difficult to solve if we presume that he was born in AH 213 and died in AH 276 as many sources maintain bearing in mind that he claimed to have derived most of his knowledge from those who witnessed the conquest of Andalus in AH 92, and he narrates directly from Abī Ya‘lā (died in AH 146). In any case, we do not favour the assumption that the book was written by a fourth century AH author as many scholars have assumed. On the basis of givens provided above, we believe that the author of the book *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* might have written it during the reign al-Mutawakkil or shortly after, that is, the reign of Sunni, resurgence if not earlier.

26. *al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah*, pp. 2–6.

27. Al-Ash‘arī, Abū al-Ḥasan, *al-Ibānah fī Uṣūl al-Dīyānah*, ed. Fawqīyah Ḥusayn Maḥmūd (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1977), pp. 247 ff. Also al-Ash‘arī repeated the same thing in his other book *al-Lami‘ fī al-Radd ‘alā Ahl al-Zaygh wa al-Bida‘*.

CHAPTER 6

Legitimising the Legitimiser

2: Analogising According to ‘Precedent’

The ‘legitimation’ of the past was only a part, the final part, of the project of ‘the imam of the theologians’ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, who was reported by Ibn Khaldūn to have

mediated between methods, denied comparative attribution of physical attributes [to Allāh] [*al-tashbīh*], confirmed moral attributes, and restricted infallibility [inerrancy] to the way the ancestors [*al-salaf*], and to apply indications of the specific [case] to the general. He confirmed the four existential attributes [life: *al-ḥayāt*; knowledge: *al-‘ilm*; capacity: *al-quḍrah*; and will: *al-irādah*] as well as hearing, seeing sight, and self-persistent speech by way of transmission of tradition and reason. He rebutted the innovators concerning these issues, and debated with them in arguments about their innovations, such as their opinions about what is right and more virtuous, improvement and distortion, and the perfection of beliefs in resurrection and the states of heaven and hell, reward and punishment. Then, he addressed the discourse concerning the imamate [*al-imāmah*] when the innovation of the doctrine of the imamate appeared through the claim that such is a part of the creed of faith and that the Prophet was obliged to designate [a successor for] it.¹

The issue, then, pertains to responding to the Mu‘tazilites concerning matters of creed (*‘aqīdah*) on the one hand, and to the Shī‘ites on the other, in the question of the imamate, and subsequently to theorise matters of creed for the Sunnis, the creeds of the ancestors, by establishing

‘fundamentals’ (*uṣūl*) for the science of creed (*ʿilm al-ʿaqīdah*, i.e., *ʿilm al-kalām*, *ʿilm al-tawḥīd*) similar to what al-Shāfiʿī did with regard to the science of Islamic law (*ʿilm al-sharīʿah*, namely jurisprudence or *fiqh*).

In fact, the book *al-Ibānah ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyānah* (*The Elucidation of the Sources of Religion*) by Abī Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, covering the main issues which Ibn Khaldūn presented in the *Muqaddimah*, discusses in its composition and meaning the *Risālah* of Muḥammad bin Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī. Perhaps the first thing that attracts our attention is the title, which clearly relates to the clarification of the *uṣūl al-dīn*, in other words the *uṣūl* of the creed (*ʿaqīdah*) as opposed to the *uṣūl* of Islamic *sharīʿah*. The two terms *ibānah* (clarification) and *uṣūl* (fundamental root sources) in the title of al-Ashʿarī’s book find their referentially authoritative power in the *Kayf al-Bayān* (*The Means of Bayān*) by al-Shāfiʿī.

Thus, just as al-Shāfiʿī based the introduction of his *Risālah* on Qurʾānic verses he chose as a prelude to what he intended to indicate, so did al-Ashʿarī begin his book with verses chosen appropriate to what he intended to indicate. We ought not underestimate the importance of this ‘external aspect’, as it was, in fact, for both al-Shāfiʿī and al-Ashʿarī, a sign of special significance: each intended to declare through it, and from the beginning, or prior to any other ‘indication’, his resort to the method of the *salaf* (pious ancestors), to the methodology based on transmission (*naql*) to subsequently make the mind (*ʿaql*) operate logically according to what is desired of it, within limits. Al-Shāfiʿī had left the camp of *ahl al-raʾy* (the people of opinion) after spending a certain time in it, and returned to the ranks of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* (people of *ḥadīth*), this time not as a mere follower, but to chart a new path that would put a limit on the huge expansion of both *ḥadīth* and opinion. Whereupon al-Ashʿarī himself announces his departure from the camp of the Muʿtazilah and the ‘return’ to the ranks of the *ahl al-sunnah* (Sunnis), not as a mere follower but also to open up a new way to restrict reason (*ʿaql*) through transmission of tradition (*naql*) and explain transmitted tradition through reason.

Likewise, as al-Shāfiʿī proceeded in his book in the chapter on *Kayf al-Bayān* according to the goal of restricting and codifying aspects of *bayān* in Qurʾānic discourse, al-Ashʿarī proceeded from ‘a chapter on the indication of the claim of *ahl al-ḥaqq wa al-sunnah*’; he also aimed at reporting the creed of the people of the truth and *sunnah* in terms of the fundamentals and the rules. Indeed, the content of the two *bayān* is not one; as the first determines the rules of methodology while the second determines the rules of creed. Even so, this difference does not distinguish between the two men, but draws them closer together: the rules of methodology determined

by al-Shāfi‘ī were directed from within the rules of faith that were determined by al-Ash‘arī, just as the rules of faith established by al-Ash‘arī are the same ones that directed – from within as well – the rules of methodology established by al-Shāfi‘ī.

How? It is either the case that the rules, or fundamentals, which were posited by al-Shāfi‘ī informed the rules and principles of creed established by al-Ash‘arī – an assumption which is acceptable ‘chronologically’ and historically since al-Ash‘arī came after al-Shāfi‘ī, and this is also what we noticed at the end of the previous chapter when we presented the manner in which al-Ash‘arī perceived the opinions of *ahl al-sunnah* with regard to the imamate, and which we will perceive shortly when we present the way Abū al-Ḥasan formulated the ‘*‘aqā’id al-salaf*’ (‘creedal tenets of the ancestors’). Or it is possible that the creedal principles posited by al-Ash‘arī informed the rules of methodology developed by al-Shāfi‘ī a hundred years before him which is unacceptable ‘chronologically’? Yet, we argued previously that thought has its particular time and that cultural time is not the same as natural, social time.

So, let us rearrange matters from within Arab *cultural* time. As for this last point in particular, we will see that to move from al-Ash‘arī to al-Shāfi‘ī, and not vice versa, might represent the ‘shortest route’ between them.

Al-Shāfi‘ī and Ibn Khaldūn on *Sharī‘ah*

Abū Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī begins the chapter entitled ‘*ibānat qawl ahl al-ḥaqq wa al-sunnah*’ (The clarification of the claim of the people of truth and sunnah.) by positing the basic fundamentals upon which he will focus. Since we are reading al-Ash‘arī through al-Shāfi‘ī, it will be easier for us to indicate from the outset that the issue attaches to the same fundamental *uṣūl* previously delineated by the latter in the sphere of legislation. Nevertheless, the text does not stop at this point, but impels us to rearrange the relation between the two men, to read al-Shāfi‘ī through al-Ash‘arī, that is, through the referential authority that governs and orients the latter (or at least which presents as such). Abū al-Ḥasan states: ‘That which we assert and the religion we follow is adherence to the Book of Allāh and the *sunnah* of our Prophet Muḥammad and what has been transmitted about the Companions, the second-generation followers [*al-tābi‘īn*] and

imams of the *ḥadīth*, and we adhere to that, and to what is said by Abū ‘Abdullah Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Ḥanbal (may Allāh save his face and raise his station): we confirm and assert whatever he does, and we reject what he rejects.²

Therefore, the starting point here with al-Ash‘arī is the same as with al-Shāfi‘ī: the Qur’ān, the *sunnah* and ‘what is narrated about the Companions’, namely *ijmā‘* (consensus). As for *ijtihād* (legal opinion), it was that of Ibn Ḥanbal. If we recall that Ibn Ḥanbal was a contemporary of al-Shāfi‘ī, and that they both belonged to the same *madhab* in terms of creed, we will realise that the interrelation between al-Ash‘arī and al-Shāfi‘ī passes through Ibn Ḥanbal (AH 164–241). We can also clarify this relation further when we know that Ibn Ḥanbal was an admirer of al-Shāfi‘ī, and having heard him speak, commented: ‘I have never seen anyone more capable as a *faqīh* (*jurist*) in the Book of Allāh than this young man’, and also: ‘If it were not for al-Shāfi‘ī we would have not known the *fiqh* of *ḥadīth*.’³

But if we compare the book *Al-Ibānah* by al-Ash‘arī and treatise of Ibn Ḥanbal on ‘*al-Radd ‘alā al-Zanādiqah wa al-Jahmīyah*’, ‘The Rebuttal of the Heretics and the Jahmīyah’,⁴ we will find ourselves before the same methodology: the methodology of al-Shāfi‘ī, that is, based on the Qur’ānic text as well as the attempt to comprehend it from within its field of discussion, that is, within the field of knowledge of the *bayān* in which the Arab mind used to operate during the time of the Prophet and his Companions. Not only that, but we will also find ourselves, in both books, confronted with the same subject: Ibn Ḥanbal replies to the ‘heretics and the Jahmīyah’, and the Jahmīyah (affiliated to al-Jahm bin Ṣafwān) share with the Mu‘tazilah denial of the (divine) attributes (*al-ṣifāt*) and the assertion of the createdness of the Qur’ān. In another regard, the participation of Jahm in an armed revolution against the Umayyads led by al-Ḥārith bin Surayj, who claimed to be the awaited Mahdī, renders him, objectively, as standing on the side of the Shī‘ites. Furthermore, al-Ash‘arī responds to both parties – the Mu‘tazilah and the Shī‘ah – as if they belong to his era; his work, then, is considered to be complementary to the work of Ibn Ḥanbal and an extension of it. If such is the case, then what does the attribution of ‘mediation’ (*al-tawassuṭ*) to al-Ash‘arī mean (when we saw that Ibn Khaldūn himself attributed this to him in the previous text)?

Indeed, the ‘mediation’ attributed to al-Ash‘arī was, and continues to be, subject to perpetual debate and disputation,⁵ due to his open declaration – as we have seen – of his fanatical devotion to the *madhab* of Ibn

Ḥanbal who stood firmly, as is well known, against the Mu‘tazilah. So what kind of ‘mediation’ could possibly be attributed to a person who openly declared his affiliation to one of the contending parties?

However, the problematic disappears completely, in our view, if we treat the matter in terms of *methodology* and not in terms of stated position. Here also, the comparison with al-Shāfi‘ī will serve us. Thus, al-Ash‘arī is to Ibn Ḥanbal as al-Shāfi‘ī is to Mālik. Al-Shāfi‘ī was, in terms of position, closer to Mālik; in fact, he championed *ḥadīth*, being even more tolerant towards and accepting of *ḥadīth* than many of the ‘*ahl al-ḥadīth*’; but, he was closer to Abū Ḥanīfah in terms of methodology since he originally adopted *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) as one of the fundamental *uṣūl* of legislation. The same applies to al-Ash‘arī, as he espoused the positions of Sunnis led by Ibn Ḥanbal who prevailed against his opponents among the Mu‘tazilah; however, in terms of *methodology*, he was closer to the Mu‘tazilah due to his intellectual and theoretical formulation of the credal tenets of the *ahl al-sunnah*. Accordingly, just as al-Shāfi‘ī theorised for the method of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* in *fiqh*, so did al-Ash‘arī for the *ahl al-sunnah* in terms of creed. In any case, matters are always evaluated according to their results.

The step taken by al-Shāfi‘ī in Sunni *fiqh*, the *fiqh* of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, in terms of theory is a modest one, but the outcome soon appeared in ‘the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh*’ which took on the character of an intellectual and methodological science; it was to the *sharī‘ah* as logic was to philosophy, and it was one of the two facets of ‘Islamic rationality’ (*al-‘aqlānīyah al-islāmīyah*). The other facet was the theology of al-Ash‘arī that absorbed the methodology of the Mu‘tazilah, namely the rational framework of their thought, not with al-Ash‘arī himself, but with those who followed his doctrine after him. Consequently, we will direct our attention towards this rational framework that conjoined, after Abū al-Ḥasan, his pupils collectively known as the Ash‘arīyah to his opponents of the Mu‘tazilah in terms of *method*.

Jurisprudence: Circumstances and Methodology

Perhaps the loss of the books of the early Mu‘tazilah was the greatest loss of the Arab-Islamic tradition throughout history. In fact, every historian of the development of the methodology of research and thought in Arab-

Islamic culture suffers greatly from this loss, more than the historian of ideas and doctrinal school of thought (*madhab*). This is because if the books on the various historical groups and factions which have come down to us convey – even though only partially – many of the views of early Mu‘tazilah, then the epistemological bases and methodological steps adopted by them might only be discernible through their own texts, and this is precisely what we lack.

Indeed, we have now at our disposal some very important texts, particularly those belonging to *al-qāḍī* ‘Abd al-Jabbār, which consist of a semi-complete written records of the thought of the Mu‘tazilah. Even if this record transmits to us the methodology of their thought as well as its foundations with sufficient clarity, it reflects a later and more developed stage of their thought in terms of methodology and *madhab*, as the interval between *al-qāḍī* ‘Abd al-Jabbār who died in AH 415 and Wāṣil bin ‘Aṭā’, founder of the *fiṛqah* of the Mu‘tazilah, who died in AH 131, or that which is between him and Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf – theoretician of this *madhab* – who died in AH 235, is extensive, indeed. Even if we do not expect a radical differences between the method of the earlier Mu‘tazilah and that of the later, our loss of the texts of the earliest exponents renders us unable to make comparisons based on evidence, such as that we could make between the method of Ibn Ḥanbal and that of al-Ash‘arī, and between these two and the method of al-Shāfi‘ī. Also, this stance does not enable us to monitor the conditions, circumstances and ways utilised for *ta’ṣīl al-uṣūl* (establishing the fundamental sources, lit. ‘rooting the sources’) in the theology of Mu‘tazilah which were inherited by way of the means and methodology used by the Ash‘arīyah, as we will indicate shortly.

Some of the treatises of Mu‘tazilī character that have been published recently, provide us with a general idea about the method followed by early Mu‘tazilah in the establishment of the other facet of *al-‘aqlānīyah al-islāmīyah* – ‘Islamic rationality’. This relates basically to the treatise *uṣūl al-‘adl wa al-tawḥīd* (*The Fundamentals of Justice and [divine] Unicity*) by Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm bin Ismā‘īl al-Rassī (AH 169–246), one of the imams of the Zaydī sect of Shī‘ism. It is well known that this sect does not differ from al-Mu‘tazilah except in the issue of the *imāmah*, and some other trivial issues and, in terms of creed, it follows the Mu‘tazilah generally. If we noticed that this Imām al-Rassī was contemporaneous with Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf, we can be reasonably assured that his exposition of the *uṣūl al-‘adl wa al-tawḥīd* would not have been appreciably different from what was widespread among al-Mu‘tazilah at that time, and chief among them Abū al-Hudhayl, theoretician of the *madhab* and to whom a book

on ‘*ṭarīqah*’ (*method*) is attributed, of which nothing has come down to us.

In fact, with the treatise of al-Qāsim al-Rassī, we are similarly directed, in the determination of the fundamental *uṣūl*, which we noticed with al-Shāfi‘ī. This enables us to say that what al-Shāfi‘ī did in terms of *al-sharī‘ah* (Islamic law), was done, almost simultaneously, by Mu‘tazilah leaders in terms of creed (*al-‘aqīdah*). What is more striking is that in both cases, the issue had to do with the same fundamental *uṣūl*, and the difference was merely in terms of ordering them. This is justified, as we will shortly explain.

Imām al-Rassī states at the beginning of his treatise:

Al-‘ibādah [worship] is divided into three facets: the first is *ma‘rifat* Allāh [the knowledge of the existence of God]; the second is knowledge of what pleases Allāh or what incurs his wrath, and the third is to do what pleases Allāh and to avoid what incurs wrath; these three forms of worship [*‘ibādāt*] constitute the three claims [*ḥujjab*] of the worshipped upon the worshiper and they are: *al-‘aql* [reason]; *al-kitāb* [the book] i.e., the Qur’ān; and *al-rasūl* [the Messenger]. The claim of *al-‘aql* was predicated on the basis of knowledge of the worshipped; that of *al-kitāb* on the knowledge of *al-ta‘abud* [worshipping]; and that of *al-rasūl* on the knowledge of how to worship [*kayfīyat al-‘ibādah*]. And, reason is the basis of the other two claims because they are known by way of it, but it is not known through *them*, so you should understand that. Then, consensus [*al-ijmā‘*] is the fourth claim which encompasses all three others and to which they refer.

Subsequently, he adds:

Know that every claim has a root origin [*aṣl*] and a branch [*far‘*], and the branch reverts to its root origin, because it has root origins which are determinative of the branches.

Thus, the basis of what is rationally intelligible is what is agreed upon by consensus among rationally intelligent people and about that which they do not differ; the branch is that about which they differ and upon which they did not reach consensus. Disagreement occurred because of difference in perception and the distinction between what must be perceived and deduced by tangible and known evidence, over that which is invisible and unknown. According to the extent of the perceptiveness of the theorist and his reasoning is his realisation of the reality of what is perceived

and deduced. The consensus of rationally intelligent people, upon the issue for which they reached a consensus, was a source principle [*aṣl*] and argumentatively determinative for the branch about which disagreement occurred. The source principle of the Book (i.e., the Qurʾān) is the definitive one about which there is no disagreement, the interpretation of which does not contradict the way it was revealed; what is of similar offshoot is traceable to its origin which is not disagreed on among *ahl al-taʾwīl* [the people of interpretation]. As a root source, the *sunnah* as communicated (in word and deed) by the Prophet, is that for which there was consensus among the people of the *qiblah* [Mecca], and the branches are whatever they have disagreed about in regard to the Prophet; anything that was disagreed upon of the accounts about the Messenger of Allāh is reverted back to the source principle of the Book and the reason [*al-ʿaql*] and consensus [*al-ijmāʿ*].⁶

Two important things we seek to emphasise in regard to this text. The first is the perfect similarity between the project of al-Shāfiʿī and that of al-Rassī, in as much as both of them sought to legitimise the source of legal opinion (that is, *al-ʿaql* or reason) in its particular domain; it is the same discourse on the same fundamentals, and the difference has to do only with their order. Accordingly, while al-Shāfiʿī situates *al-ijtihād* or *al-qiyās* (independent reasoning or analogical deduction) in the fourth place, al-Rassī ranks them first. This is fully justified as al-Shāfiʿī defines the fundamental *uṣūl* of Islamic-legitimacy (*al-tashrīʿ*) where the first is transmitted tradition (*al-naql*), while reason is for nothing more than analogy and deduction. As for the Muʿtazilah – and al-Rassī thinks from within their field of knowledge – they sought to defend the faith against those who did not believe in the Book or the *sunnah*, or oriented towards understanding the faith in a way that could not be defended against with opponents of Islam, in the way in which the Ḥashawīyah⁷ or the Mushabbahah did. Moreover, the approach itself of ‘a hermeneutic interpretation’ (*taʾwīl*) is unacceptable in the Arab *bayān*, which is assumed by the Muʿtazilah to be an essential referential authority. In any case, reason for the Muʿtazilah, or as for al-Shāfiʿī, is only an instrument; it is in all circumstances in the service of the Book and the *sunnah* and not a substitute for them.

As for the second aspect, we wish to emphasise in the foregoing text the necessity of reverting the *farʿ* (branch) back to its root source (*aṣl*), whether the matter pertains to understanding the Book or confirming the *sunnah* by consensus (*al-ijmāʿ*) or reason. Thus, with regard to the Book, it is necessary to revert to ambiguous verses (*mutashābihāt*), each of which

corresponds to a *far*^c (branch) back to decisive operative verses (*muḥkamāt*), where each of these corresponds to an *aṣl* (root source). Similarly, with regard to the *ḥadīth* traditions, disputed accounts are tantamount to branches that should be reverted to agreed upon *ḥadīth* which are tantamount to (decisive) root sources. As for *ijmā*^c, it can be said that the original root source (*aṣl*) is the *ijmā*^c of the Companions, and furthermore, every *ijmā*^c should be reverted back to that. In terms of intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt*), the root source is found in the rationally self-evident axioms perceptible through reason or the senses or socio-linguistic practice (*khibrah*), and the branch is what is produced through theorisation and deduction. In other words, dealing with the *uṣūl* (fundamentals) is undertaken here, in Mu'tazilite *kalām* through the same mental mechanism employed in dealing with the same fundamentals in *fiqh*. It is the mechanism of reverting the branch to the source which is no different, in its being a mental instrument of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*): deriving the branch through analogical reasoning in conjunction with the root source (*aṣl*) or deriving the 'absent and unseen (in absentia)' on the basis of what is 'extant and known (in praesentia)'.

Moreover, perhaps the concern of the Mu'tazilah for regulating this mental mechanism (analogical deduction) *qiyās* and its techniques was not less than the concern of the *fuqahā*^c in *uṣūl al-fiqh: al-qāḍī*. 'Abd al-Jabbār says in his book *al-Muḥīṭ bi-l-Taklīf (The Comprehensive Treatise on Culpability)* under the heading 'Section on the deduction of the unseen through the witnessed [evidence]' (*bāb fī-l-istidlāl bi-al-shāhid 'alā al-ghā'ib*) as follows:

Know that this subject is vast, and people have spoken about it extensively. And perhaps many of those who have gone astray have done so for the reason of deducing the unseen via the witnessed in what is outside this sphere. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt, God have mercy on his soul, has a book on this matter, and the two Sheikhs, God have mercy on their souls, have various discourses on the issue. Abū Hāshim mentioned in the first of the *'askarīyāt*, a matter. What was circulating in books is that deduction of the unseen through what is witnessed is of two aspects: one is commonality in proof, and the second is commonality of causal basis [*'illah*].⁸

However, was this the concern of the Mu'tazilah alone?

In reality, deduction of the unseen through what is witnessed was the preferred method of all *mutakallimūn* (theologians), including the

Mu‘tazilah, and, among them, the Ḥanbalis and Ash‘arites. And, if we do not have a text to bear witness to the extent of the concern of early Ḥanbalis in theorising about this methodology and in explicating the conditions of its validity, we find among the most prominent Ḥanbalī exponents of the fifth century worthy of consideration, Abū Ya‘lā al-Ḥanbalī, who died in AH 458, says that: ‘The unseen can be potentially deduced through what is witnessed in four aspects: one of them is the causal basis [*‘illah*], the second is the limit [*ḥadd*], the third is the corrective [*muṣaḥiḥ*], and the fourth is the proof [*dalīl*].’⁹ Then he explains these aspects and gives examples for them, which cannot be dealt with for the time being.¹⁰ What is important is that even those who were the most ardent adherents of the literal meaning of the texts and the most ‘restrictive’ in terms of recourse to reason (*al-‘aql*), confronted explicit acknowledgement of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) as a means of deduction, and moreover, in acquiring knowledge in the domains of religious creed.

As for the Ash‘arites, their position was less ambiguous and more significant. The followers of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī fully absorbed the method of the Mu‘tazilah; perhaps their interest in theorising about this method was even deeper and more extensive. The truth is that any *madhab* in Islam, whether of *fiqh* or creed, did not know the like of the development known to the thinking of the Ash‘arites, particularly from the perspective of *madhab*. This is due to the fact that if the followers of Abū al-Ḥasan remained bound, in general, to *‘aqā’id al-salaf* – the ‘creedal bases of the [pious] ancestors’ – as formulated by the founder of the *madhab*, then those who came immediately after him developed the *ṭarīqat al-salaf* (‘the method of the ancestors’) much more extensively. They engaged in discussion and argument with the Mu‘tazilah, were influenced by them, and adopted their methodology completely – not just to respond to them but also to decide upon issues of their *madhab* as well. Therefore, in addition to their adoption of the method of *al-istidlāl bi-al-shāhid ‘alā al-ghā’ib* (deduction of the unseen through what is witnessed) as the ideal way in theorising or hypothesising, they adopted a great deal of the presumptions that were posited by the Mu‘tazilah as rational cognitive sources for their *madhab*, and they consist, in toto, of ‘givens’ related to ‘what is witnessed’, that is, the natural world such as bodies, motion and other. From this standpoint, Ash‘arite theology is comprised, just as that of the Mu‘tazilah, of two parts; the cases of the first prove the cases of the second. The first part consists of *daqīq al-kalām* (precise terms), that ‘whereby reason is distinguished’, namely givens and theories particular to the world of nature (that is, what is witnessed).

As for the second part, it is the *jalīl al-kalām* (transcendent terms), which is ‘referred to the book of God the omnipotent [the Qur’ān]’, namely religious creeds related to the unseen – the metaphysical realm beyond nature. Thus, in order to demonstrate the validity of their opinions in the *jalīl al-kalām* (transcendental terms), the Ash‘arites, just as the Mu‘tazilah, resort to *daqīq al-kalām* (precise terms) in order to build upon that which is witnessed in a way that enabled them to construct analogies for the unseen. From this arose the ‘theological physics’ upon which the Ash‘arites based their *madhab*, the foundation of which rested on a series of opinions on the individual essence (*al-jawhar al-fard*), the void (*al-khalāʿ*), accidents (*al-aʿrāḍ*), qualities (*al-ṣifāt*), states (*al-aḥwāl*), time (*al-zamān*), place (*al-makān*) and causality (*al-sababīyah*), and so forth, and they considered faith in these to be part of their religious creed, faith in that upon which their evidences rested, and their creedal tenets – especially in the case of al-Bāqillānī who stated that ‘the invalidity of the indication/proof [*dalīl*] calls for the invalidity of what is indicated [*madlūl*]’ as expressed by Ibn Khaldūn.¹¹

The Ash‘arites absorbed the method of Mu‘tazilah and took it to its farthest limits when they openly revealed the epistemological principle upon which it is founded: the principle of ‘the invalidity of the indication (*dalīl*) calls for the invalidity of what is indicated (*madlūl*)’. The original purpose of practising this form of deduction, with the Mu‘tazilah, is to invalidate the doctrine (*madhab*) of the opponent, the Manichean *madhab* and others, by considering the ‘what is witnessed’ – that is, perceptible reality and socio-linguistic experience as the fundamental basis to which the branch refers (where the unseen is equivalent to creed); thus, for that for which an indication (*dalīl*) has been found, it is, *a priori*, accepted; whereas, that for which no indication has been found in reality, is, *a priori*, rejected. From this standpoint came the necessity of building upon reality in a form that would reinforce the creed of the Mu‘tazilah and invalidate that of their opponents – the Manicheans and others.

The Mu‘tazilah were not in need of resting on explicit calls to faith in order to demonstrate the correctness of their constructs on the basis of what is witnessed – that is, their rational premises – as they used to present these as the product of reason which they considered a decisive criterion between them and their opponents, proceeding from the idea that ‘reason takes primacy over what is heard, (i.e., transmitted) – *al-aql qabl wurūd al-samʿ*. And when the Ash‘arites adopted the same method in deduction to respond to their Mu‘tazilite opponents, they had to establish their own ‘rational’ premises, to support their religious creeds and to simultaneously

invalidate the creeds of their opponents, the Mu‘tazilah. This contributed to the struggle focusing on ‘premises’, as invalidating them would necessarily lead to invalidating the religious point of view upon which these were founded. Since this was true for both opponents, it was unavoidable that each side should resort to fortifying its premises within its sphere, meaning presenting them in a manner rendering them, at least in the view of their partisans, as being removed from all doubt.

As for the Mu‘tazilites, this issue did not present any problem, as the rational premises upon which they founded their *madhab* were considered genuinely rational, in the sense of their being categorised as mental (rational) necessities (axioms); and in their view, these served as the bases for their religious creed – in fact, for the same reason and in accordance with their primary principle: ‘reason takes precedence over what is heard [i.e., transmitted] [*al-‘aql qabl wurūd al-sam‘*]’. Therefore, there was no contradiction in the Mu‘tazilite theology (*kalām*) between the *madhab* and method, given that one complements the other, so they had no need for ‘recourse’ to Aristotelian logic, even during their debates with philosophers. They had their own particular technique of deduction and proof (*istidlāl*), so if an opponent were to agree to engage them on their own terms, in an arena which they had chosen, and using the same weapon, they might be victorious; and, this was what transpired with the Manicheans and the Ash‘arites. In cases where an opponent insisted on adherence to his arena and weapon, as the philosophers did, the disjuncture would be total between them; and this is what happened, in fact, when the Mu‘tazilah and the philosophers continued to proceed along parallel lines that never intersected.

As for the Ash‘arites, their situation was entirely different: they did not believe in rational necessity; on the contrary, they denied causality and considered it as merely normative habit (*‘ādah*), in addition to their rejection of the fundamental principle of the Mu‘tazilah of the primacy of the reason over transmitted tradition (*asbaqīyat al-‘aql ‘alā al-naql*). This implies that the ‘rational premises’ they posited to prove the validity of their religious creeds were *not* characterised by rational necessity, and therefore were not, even in their view, indisputable certainties (*yaqīnīyah*), as if they were mere ‘suppositions’ (*muwāḍa‘āt*): nothing justifies them except their suitability for being used as premises for conclusions in which they already and previously believed. As long as ‘suitability’ is the criterion for choosing premises, this may lead to falling into (logical) impossibilities (*muḥālāt*) and conundrums, as it might be that a matter of faith may dictate the use of premises which might lead to rational impossibilities.

In actual fact, this method of deduction had caused a quandary for Ash‘arites, and it is the way that Ibn Khaldūn terms ‘the way of the early generations [*al-mutaqaddimūn*]’. And if the author of the *Muqaddimah* (*The Prolegomena*) attributes this to the fact that ‘the forms of the evidences were sometimes not persuasive due to the naivety of the people and because the production of the logic employed to probe evidences and whereby analogies were assessed, had not yet appeared at that time within the *millah*, and even if anything of it had appeared, the *mutakallimūn* would not have employed it on the basis of its being associated with ‘the philosophical sciences entirely inconsistent with creed of Islamic *shar‘*’.¹² This interpretation emphasises, in fact, what would happen next, namely that the Ash‘arites would seek recourse to Aristotelian logic, under the pressure of exigency and their consideration of it as ‘only a law [*qānūn*] and criterion [*mi‘yār*] for evidences’ as according to the expression of Ibn Khaldūn himself.

In reality the justification held by Ibn Khaldūn does not sufficiently explain what transpired, and the proof of that is that the Mu‘tazilah continued to rely on the same method without sensing a contradiction and without falling into rational impossibilities of the sort into which the Ash‘arites fell. The reality is what we have demonstrated previously in exposing the contradiction between their *madhab* and the method they adopted from the Mu‘tazilah: the contradiction between the denial of the principles of reason (*mabādi‘ al-‘aql*) such as the principle of causality – for instance – and adherence to the operation of reason (*‘amal al-‘aql*). This is the problem of Ash‘arites, of both yesteryear and today, even the problem of all those who welcome the outcomes of applied sciences but reject its founding theoretical principles. Thus, do we need to seek for any other reason to explain our not being producers of science?

In any case, the Ash‘arites have abandoned, since al-Ghazālī, this ‘method of the early generations’, and have ‘embraced’ Aristotelian logic, and this was ‘the method of the later generations’ as Ibn Khaldūn terms it.

But how can this be? Is not the gap between Aristotelian logic and the creed of the Ash‘arites wider than the one between this creed and the method of the Mu‘tazilah? And has the production of logic ceased to be affiliated with the philosophical sciences entirely inconsistent with creed of Islamic *shar‘*?

The answer to this question requires further development in our enquiries, therefore we will leave it to a later stage. As for now, we will focus our attention on another field of the Arab-Islamic culture which adopted the

same method of analogical deduction as an instrument for theoretical production and the structuring of knowledge (*al-binā' al-ma'rifī*).

A Genius for Syntax, Analogue of Analogy

The biographical dictionaries (*al-ṭabaqāt*) on the (ancient) grammarians (*nulḥāh*) mention that 'Abdullah bin Abī Ishāq al-Ḥaḍramī, who died in AH 117, was the 'first to dissect grammar, extend analogical reasoning and explain causal dependence [*al-'ilal*]' and that he was 'strongly predisposed to abstraction and analogical reasoning'. The same books confirm that al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad, who died in AH 175, had 'attained the goal of rectifying analogical reasoning and deriving the matters of grammar/syntax [*al-naḥw*] and their analysis'. As for Sībawayh, who died in AH 180, his book confirms that analogical reasoning in matters of syntax/grammar had become a mental mechanism at his time, even an intellectual exercise, for theoretical production in the field of syntax.

Thus, at this early stage, namely before al-Shāfi'ī composed his *Risālah*, analogical reasoning had transcended its original function in syntax, which is 'to convey the discourse of some Arabs to others', to become occupied with mental syntactic suppositions, far removed from normative Arab discourse, even from Arab 'intuition' (*al-salīqah*). Immediately after Sībawayh, and perhaps during his lifetime, writing in the methodology of syntax had begun, particularly on analogical reasoning and causality, as the biographical dictionaries on grammarians as well as Ibn Nadīm's *al-Fihrist* mention: that Muḥammad bin Mustanīr, famously known as Quṭrub, who died in AH 206, who was a student of Sībawayh, had authored a book entitled *al-'Ilal fī-l-Naḥw* (*The Causal Bases in Syntax*). Subsequently, many books on syntactic causes and analogical reasoning were composed, until reaching a peak in the methodology of syntax with Ibn al-Anbārī, deceased in AH 577, author of the books *Uṣūl al-Naḥw* (*The Fundamentals of Syntax*); *al-Aghrāb fī Jadāl al-A'rāb* (*The Uncommon in the Debate on Syntax*); and *al-Inṣāf fī Masā'il al-Khilāf* (*Equity in Matters of Contention*), etc.

We would like to draw attention here to the process of regulation and codification of rules in the methodology of research in syntax which began at the time when al-Shāfi'ī composed his *Risālah* on the *uṣūl al-fiqh*; this raises the question as to who preceded who in 'legitimising' (*tashrīḥ*) reason (*al-'aql*) in Arab-Islamic culture: was it the grammarians or the *fuqahā'*?

If we are not able to arrive at a definitive answer in this matter, the

sources available permit us to say that the grammarians and linguists, in general, were the first to consciously apply analogical reasoning (*al-qiyās*). This is because if *fiqh* was initially predicated on transmitted traditions – *al-naql* (the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*) – then syntax was predicated from its inception on analogical reasoning; as syntax, by definition, is ‘the science of criteria deduced from the induction [*istiqrāʾ*] of Arab discourse’, or as described by al-Kisāʾī: ‘Syntax is applied analogical reasoning [*qiyās yuttaba*]’.¹³ And, whether we refer the inception of syntax to Abū al-Aswad al-Duʿālī (died AH 67), who is described as being ‘the first to delineate syntax for people’, or if we posit it at the time of ‘Abdullah bin Abī Ishāq al-Ḥaḍḍāmī, who historians of Arabic syntax concur was one of those who applied syntax in methodology and analogical reasoning, we will find ourselves – in both cases – obliged to acknowledge that grammarians were the first to apply analogical reasoning methodically.

As for the question whether grammarians benefited from the *mutakallimūn* in achieving this first before the *fuqahāʾ*, or whether it was they who benefited the *mutakallimūn* in this field, this is an issue difficult to resolve for the fundamental reason that the major figures among early grammarians were also *mutakallimūn* and most of them were Muʿtazilite. If we leave the issue of ‘precedence’ aside, we will note immediately that grammarians continued to adopt from *mutakallimūn* and ‘ulamāʾ’ of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* their conceptual apparatus and methodological tools, from the time they began theorising their discourse until they reached an apex with ‘the philosophy of syntax’.

In fact, the impact of the theological discourse of the *kalām* on syntactical discourse remained constant during the centuries when theology flourished. Grammarians adopted many of their concepts, even their theoretical issues, from the *mutakallimūn*, and thus acquired the preoccupation of those theologians in their discussions, debates, arguments and analyses to the extent that made them seek, in their issues of rhetorical discourse, applications in the field of syntax, in a completely arbitrary way. Thus, for instance, they associated the theological concept of the word ‘movement’ [*ḥarakah*] with ‘inflections’ in syntax, and they put forward the concept of ‘essence’ (*jawhar*) and accident (‘*arḍ*) in some of their discussions, just as they forbade the combining of two significations or desinential inflections (*iʿrab*) resting for support on one of the fundamental source principles (*aṣl*) of the *mutakallimūn* which is the assertion that two determining factors (*muʾathir*) do not apply to a single subject, etc. Even though the method of the *fuqahāʾ* in the analysis of rulings (*ahkām*) was more accurate and precise, the grammarians did not hesitate to favour the analyses

of the *mutakallimūn* among them. Ibn Jinnī says in this regard: ‘Know that the analyses of the grammarians, I mean their experts possessed of indubitable skill and not their lesser practitioners, is nearer to the analyses of the *mutakallimūn* than to the practitioners of *fiqh*; that is because they have recourse to the senses and argue the significance or insignificance of the case subjectively by way of these, which is not the same as the expression of the analyses of the *fuqahā*.’ And he also asserts: ‘We would never assert that the analyses of the scholars of the Arabic language is in the technique of theological analyses, but we claim that it is nearer to such than it is to *fiqh* analyses. If we allow axiom or reason to decide for us and we are elevated to the level of nature and the senses, then we will have given the profession its full due and reconciled the furthest reaches of its pinnacles.’¹⁴

This was in the realm of analysis, whereas in the realm of delimiting the fundamentals (*uṣūl*), the grammarians depended entirely on the *uṣūl al-fiqh*, not merely in terms of terminology and categories, but also in terms of structure and formation. And according to our current information, it was Ibn al-Anbārī (died AH 577) who succeeded in reproducing the general structure of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* and establishing on the basis of it ‘the fundamentals of syntax (*uṣūl al-naḥw*)’.

This is clearly manifest in his short treatise under the title of *Lumaʿ al-Adillah* [‘The Radiance of Evidences’],¹⁵ where we read in its introduction: ‘The fundamentals [*uṣūl*] of syntax are the evidences [*adillah*] of syntax from which branch categories and sections, just as *uṣūl al-fiqh* where evidences of *fiqh* branch from it in complete detail. Its benefit is the reliance on confirming the ruling by using arguments and analyses, and to ascend from the lowlands of emulation [*al-taqlīd*] to the highlands of the cognizance the proof.’¹⁶ And this correspondence between the structure of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* and that of the *uṣūl* of syntax is not constrained to merely level of definition and purpose, but the ‘evidences of syntax’ borrows the same names as ‘the evidences of *fiqh*’ and adopts the same issues and epistemological problematics.

Thus, the evidences of syntax are three: transmitted tradition (*al-naql*), analogical reasoning (*al-qiyyās*), and transference of a like condition (*istiṣḥāb ḥāl*), and these are ranked accordingly (in this order), as are the deductions achieved by these means’. As for the transmitted tradition, it consists of: ‘the literate Arabic discourse transmitted by sound tradition, outside maximal and minimal limits’ and divided into two types: ‘widely-transmitted [*tawātur*] and the transmission of single individuals [*āḥād*]; as for what is widely transmitted, it is the language of the Qurʾān and what is

widely transmitted of the *sunnah* and Arab discourse', and it has its conditions just as the reports of individual transmitters (*naql al-āḥād*) have conditions.¹⁷ As for analogical reasoning, it consists of 'determining the branch based upon the [legal] import of the root'; and if anyone denies the argumentative value [*ḥujjīyah*] of analogical reasoning in *fiqh*, 'denial of analogical reasoning [*qiyās*] in syntax cannot be realised as syntax is *entirely* analogical reasoning [*al-naḥw kulluhu qiyās*] . . . so whoever denies analogical reasoning, denies syntax'.¹⁸

Enquiry into the 'categories of analogical deduction' comes as an exact duplicate of what the *ʿulamā'* of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* were deliberating in this regard. Thus, analogical deduction consists of three categories: analogical reasoning by way of causal basis [*qiyās ʿillah*], analogical reasoning by way of resemblance [*qiyās shabah*] and analogical reasoning by way of exclusion [*qiyās ṭard*]. The first type is where 'the branch [*farʿ*] is grafted onto the root [*aṣl*] by way of the causal basis [*ʿillah*] to which the ruling pertains in the original [case] along the lines of attributing what is not designated as its doer [*fāʿil*] as the doer on the causal basis of support'. As for the second type, it consists of 'grafting the branch [*farʿ*] onto the root [*aṣl*] by way of propounding a simile other than the causal basis to which the legal ruling [*ḥukm*] attaches in the original case; and the like of that which is indicated by the declension of the present-tense verb [*al-fiʿl al-muḍāriʿ*] because it is specified with its declension just as a noun is specified after its declension and becomes parsed as a noun.' The third type consists of 'the case where there is a legal ruling [*ḥukm*] that has lost its *ikhālah* – that is, its defining occasion [*munāsibah*] for the causal basis, and they differ about its being decisive'.¹⁹

During and after all that, all the basic problems concerning analogical reasoning and its types that arise in books on *fiqh* and *uṣūl* came to be presented as though the problems of syntax were of the same genre as those of jurisprudence. Subsequent to this came discussions about '*istiḥsān*' and 'objecting to transmitted tradition [*al-naql*] by transmitted tradition' and 'analogising by analogical reasoning [*qiyās bi-l-qiyās*]' which then proceeded to the third fundamental which is 'the transference of a conditioning circumstance/status' (*istiṣḥāb ḥal*) which connotes 'transferring the original status [*ḥal*] of the original [case] [*istiṣḥāb ḥal al-aṣl*] in nouns, which is syntax [*al-iʿrāb*] and transferring the original status with verbs which is structure – *al-bināʾ*'. Furthermore, the author does not neglect to devote Chapter 30 (the last chapter) of his book to the issue through which al-Bāqillānī had discovered the principle founding deduction of the unseen through evidence, and who asserted that the invalidity of evidence

led to the invalidity of the evidenced.

Thus, we read in the fundamentals of syntax for al-Anbārī and under the rubric:

On the inference through the absence of evidence to the non-existence of something' the following: 'Know that if this is proven then its evidence exists as well, and so the lack of evidence indicates its non-existence. An example for the demonstration of the absence of four kinds of speech or the lack of five kinds of syntax, implies that if there were four kinds of speech or five kinds of syntax then there must be an evidence for that [*dalīl*], and if there were an evidence it would have appeared along with the numerous studies and stringent investigations into the matter. And, since such is *not* known, it is deduced that there is no evidence [to support this] then there ought not be four kinds of speech and five kinds of syntax. And some have claimed that the non-existence [or absence of a counter-indication] is not evidence, but rather evidence is what is proven. And this is not true, as judging something on the basis of non-existence cannot be made except by way of evidence, and as the proven should be evidenced/indicated, the non-existing also must be proven by evidence.²⁰

Yet, the reproduction of 'the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh*' by syntacticians, in terms of structure, idioms and other matters, was one side of the coin. As for the other side, it was the 'application' of syntactic thinking in jurisprudence. We mean resolving the issues of jurisprudence *syntactically*. And, if some syntacticians have applied this method as a means of 'rhetorical eloquence' and debate, namely intentionally and consciously, then this proves that some of the syntactic thinking was always present within the thought of the *fuqahā*'.

One of the famous incidents in this regard corresponds to the debate between the illustrious grammarian al-Farrā' with Muḥammad bin Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, companion of Abū Ḥanīfah and the master of al-Shāfi'ī. Al-Farrā' used to say that 'if a man is theoretically proficient in one of the domains of science, he finds others readily accessible'. He meant that mastering the techniques of one of the Arab-Islamic sciences such as syntax would render comprehending *fiqh* a simple matter. So Muḥammad bin Ḥasan tested him on a doctrinal issue and asked: 'What do you say of a man who was praying but then is distracted, so he performs two prostrations to compensate for his distraction and again he is distracted in both?' Al-Farrā' replied, saying: 'He has nothing incumbent on him.' When Muḥammad bin Ḥasan asked him 'Why?', al-Farrā' answered: 'Because

for us (that is, those of us in syntax) there is no diminution of a diminutive: two prostrations constitute a complete prayer, and there is no complete of completion.’

Whatever is the outcome of this incident, it emphasises that the ‘application’ or rules of syntax in *fiqh* produces a ‘correct’ jurisprudential thinking. This method was discovered by syntacticians and mastering it was a subject of pride and emulation. Along these lines, Ibn Ḥaddad al-Maṣrī, who was a Shāfi‘ite scholar, ‘used to give talks every Friday night on issues of *fiqh* employing the method of syntax [*al-naḥw*]’. Moreover, the passion in applying the methodology of syntacticians in *fiqh* was transmitted from the level of debates to the level of writings. In this context, we find Sheikh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Asnawī (died AH 772) writing a book entitled *al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah fī Tanzīl al-Furū‘ al-Fiqhīyah ‘alā al-Qawā‘id al-Naḥwīyah* ‘(*The Shimmering Stars in the Application of Branch Disciplines of Jurisprudence in the Grammatical Bases of Syntax*),²¹ and this title speaks for itself.

Deduction Through Evidence: al-Istidlāl

‘The application of branch disciplines of jurisprudence to rules of syntax,’ and in similar terms: the implementation of the fundamentals of syntax in the fundamentals of *fiqh*, and then the implementation of syntactical concepts in the principles of theology, and the implementation of the principles of theology in the rules of syntax are what best reflects the basic reality within Arab-Islamic culture: the reality of interpolation and integration between syntax (*al-naḥw*), jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) and theology (*al-kalām*) at the level of methodology, even at the level of legitimising reason (*al-‘aql*).

Nevertheless, do the threads of interconnection and integration between Arab and Islamic knowledge cease at the limits of syntax, *fiqh* and theology? In other words, are these three domains of knowledge the only ones founded by the analogical reasoning of *al-qiyās*, adducing the branch (*far‘*) from the root source (*aṣl*)?

Al-Sakkākī says: ‘Whoever masters one fundamental among those of the science of rhetorical demonstration – *‘ilm al-bayān* – such as the fundamental principle of comparison or metonymy or metaphor, and adheres to its method in answering enquiries, he will be acquainted with the means of the order of inference.’²² Al-Sakkākī explains how ‘the one who applies

comparison or metonymy or metaphor . . . charts the same course as one who applies evidence to reach his purpose'. Thus, he says: 'By all means, if you use a simile by saying "Her cheek is a rose", you do nothing other than to apply to the cheek what you know of a necessity must be red, which leads you to describe it as such. Or, if you were to designate someone by saying: this person is "full of ashes" [*jamm al-ramād*], you indicate something other than that this person is [literally] a large quantity of ashes [but rather that due to the amount of cooking for guests at his household] you consequently conveying to your audience, the connotation of hospitality.'²³ And al-Sakkākī specifies that 'the authoritative reference of the science of rhetorical demonstration [*ʿilm al-bayān*] is the consideration of attendant necessitations within meanings' in two aspects: 'the transition from the necessitated to the necessitating' (to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity) that is the metaphor 'as in saying we pastured the rain, and the intended meaning is that which it necessitates is the seedling' and 'the transition from the necessitating to the necessitated [i.e., what is intended or the intended meaning of a necessity]' is metonymy/allusion 'as in saying: this person is long of sword belt, indicating his tall stature which *necessitated* a lengthy sword belt'.²⁴

Some contemporary Arab researchers blame al-Sakkākī for mixing discourse on indication/explication (*al-bayān*) which is a branch of the science of rhetoric (*ʿilm al-balāghah*) with discourse on deduction (*istidlāl*) which is one of the divisions of the science of logic (*ʿilm al-manṭiq*). And we see no justification for this reproach, except, of course, if one is embarking from a conception which posits a distinction between logical discourse and rhetorical discourse, as is the case of Aristotle. As for the case when one considers Arab discourse as it is in its essence – not as it could be interpreted from a vantage point which takes Aristotle as the referential authority – he will find that it bears its own logic which is, fundamentally, rhetorical methods and styles. And we believe that if al-Sakkākī or others than he among later scholars of rhetoric had read the methods of Arab *bayān* logically, it is because they discovered its logical characteristic and not because they used to 'force' logic out of its context. And if there were an interpolation of a 'foreign' logic, it would be restricted to the manner of presenting the material and systemising it.

In fact, the emergence of the science of rhetoric in Arab-Islamic culture was, just like any other Arab knowledge, driven by an intrinsic need within this culture and not because of any extrinsic influence. The analysis of the Arab rhetorical discourse tended to reveal its intrinsic logic, in the purpose

of investing the Qurʾānic text in the fields of both Islamic *sharīʿah* and the religious creed (*ʿaqīdah*). On the one hand, there was no doubt that in order to derive the Islamic-legal rulings (*al-ahkām al-sharʿīyah*) from the Qurʾān there must be a systemised ‘codified’ knowledge of the modes of expression in it. On the other hand, it was necessary to demonstrate the miraculous nature of the Qurʾān (*iʿjāz al-qurʾān*), in order to confront those who denied its veracity.

Indeed, establishing rhetoric as one of the Arab sciences is due to the early *mutakallimūn* (theologians), in particular the Muʿtazilah, who had to confront opponents who focused on denying the miraculous nature of the Qurʾān (*iʿjāz al-qurʾān*) against both Islam and Arabs (heretics, chauvinist popular movements), therefore it was necessary to unveil the ‘evidences of miraculousness’ in Arab discourse and to clarify the ‘secrets of rhetoric’ in it. And this was confronted by the early rhetoricians who analysed Arab rhetorical discourse from within, namely without resorting to Aristotle or anyone else as a referential authority; thus, the outcome was the establishing of the second division of ‘Arab logic’, the logic of the Arabic language, subsequent to the establishment of the first division by syntacticians. The syntacticians began to codify Arabic discourse and to identify its logical categories and patterns, as previously indicated,²⁵ and here the rhetoricians accomplished the selfsame task by demonstrating the aspects of miraculousness in the same discourse, namely the disclosure of its mechanisms of inferential proof/demonstration – *burhān*.

Then, what are these mechanisms, or in other words, what are the bases of the Arab rhetoric and consequently the bases of inimitability (*iʿjāz*), persuasion (*iqnāʿ*) and demonstration (*burhān*) in Arab discourse?

Rhetoricians concur that the entire method of *bayān* in the Arabic tongue refer to comparison: for ‘comparison is commonly utilised in the discourse of Arabs, to the extent that if someone says: it consists most of their discourse he would be fair’ and ‘it resembles an infinite domain’,²⁶ ‘and it came from the ancients and pre-Islamic people from every generation, what implies for its honour, virtue and position in the rhetoric on every tongue’,²⁷ in short, ‘comparison identifies rhetoric’²⁸ and ‘if you excel in it, then you have mastered the practice in the arts of charming eloquence’.²⁹

Al-Jurjānī explains the secret of inimitability (*iʿjāz*) in comparison when it meets the conditions of rhetoric and those of the *bayān*, saying: ‘It is an art requiring brilliant faculty and skilful proficiency capable of binding stems of inconsonant/discordant contrasts within a single bundle, and tying between foreign wordings knots of kinship and connections (as cognates). An art is only honoured and the virtues of a work are only remembered

if they necessitate sharp thought, keenness of perception and percipience that is only required for them. And in this sense, they refer to their practitioners and those who seek them when there is none other to which to possibly refer, and they only do so for the purpose of seeking harmony in the differences.’ Then he adds, ‘And you must know that I am not saying when you compose something entirely different from the usual type, for you would be correct and have done well, but I would say this following constraints and conditions: that is to be pertinent in contrasts of type, and apparent and accurate and reasonable comparison, and to find equal adequacy in positing a correspondence between them, justifying taking a path and having recourse to them.’³⁰

‘Combining contrasts of type . . . and positing a correspondence between them’ illustrates the secret of Arab rhetoric, and this is the mechanism of *bayān* (indication/explication) and *burhān* (demonstration/proof) in the Arab discourse. In fact, if we consider Arab *qaṣīdah* (lyric poetry) during the Jāhilīyah era, and consequently in ‘the Arab *diwān*’ we will find it consisting of a series of separated chains, where each chain represents a form of ‘*bayān*’ that combines two contrasting types, and attempts to posit a correspondence between them, either in the form of a comparison or as a metaphor or metonymy or figuration (allegory); all of which are originally and in essence *comparisons*. Undoubtedly, the composition of a truncated *qaṣīdah* (where every verse is independent of the other) on the one hand, and the formation of the same verse (*bayt*) based on comparison or what refers to it on the other hand, renders the image presented by the Arabic *qaṣīdah* about the world of nature and emotions, consisting of consecutive but isolated scenes, where every scene forgets the other or nullifies it. And in most cases these scenes are sensate. The reason is because comparison is designed to transfer the person addressed from intelligible to the tangible-sensate, making it an analogy appending the unknown absent (*in absentia*) with the known evident (lit., what is *witnessed* – *in praesentia*) through a characteristic or a resemblance between them. This analogical, indicative *bayānī* nature of comparison made it disagreeable for Arabs to compare anything with an unfamiliar or imperceptible (intangible) thing. In this regard, al-Jāhīz narrated that some people have been confused with the saying of Allāh the Most Exalted: ‘It is a tree [i.e., the tree of *al-zaqūm* (Q 44:42)] emanating from hell, its branches like the heads of satans [*ruʿūs al-shayāṭīn*]’ so they said that the heads of satans are not perceived nor known so how is it that they could be compared to the tree of hell? Therefore, some claimed that the heads of satans (*ruʿūs al-shayāṭīn*) is the name of a plant that grows in Yemen, meaning that

they made it tangible and perceptible in order to rectify the comparison and analogy. In other words, what is absent or unseen ought to be analogised on the basis of evidence, as for the previous verse, the unseen in it is ‘the tree of hell’ (*shajarat jahannam*) that was compared and analogised on the basis of the absent/unseen ‘heads of demons’ (*ru’ūs al-shayātīn*) which is incompatible with the *bayān* in the view of those who opposed it.

Whatever the case with this ‘mishap’ narrated by al-Jāhiz, the Arab scholars of rhetoric were fully aware of the indicative/inferential nature of the Arab *bayān*. This was explicitly expressed by al-Jurjānī when he said: ‘As for metaphor [*isti‘ārah*], it is a similitude of comparison and a mode of metaphor/personification or *tamthīl* [allegory] and comparison [*tashbīh*] is analogy [*qiyās*].³¹ Ibn al-Athīr says that: the figurative (*al-majāz*) ‘is an aspect of analogy in attributing something to what is appropriate to it and which conforms with it’. He adds: ‘and if we take careful notice of metaphor and comparison, we will find them to be a matter of analogy in attributing a branch to a root through what is a certain conformity between them, even if they are different in terms of their delimitations and genuine natures.’³²

Indeed, ‘comparison is analogy’, metaphor and comparison are for figurative language, they are expressive methods entirely based on ‘attributing the branch to the root on the basis of a certain conformity between them’ but if this was logically true, namely in terms of the logical analysis of Arab discourse then, perhaps it would have been more accurate to historically say, in terms of historical-existential analysis of the thinking mechanism of the Arab mind, that: ‘analogy is comparison [*al-qiyās tashbīh*]’, meaning that analogy which constituted, and still constitutes, the productive mental act of Arab culture – in syntax, jurisprudence and discourse – is actually the employment, at the level of abstract thinking, of the same mechanism of first recourse in Arab rhetoric, the device of *comparison*. And if this is true, although we do not perceive possible contestation over it in the light of previous elucidations, then the genealogy – or the study of the lineage – of Arab thinking should be sought in the Arabic language and its rhetorical methods of *bayān* first and foremost, just as the origins of the perception of the contemporary Arab individual of the world ought to be sought in the viewpoint of the Bedouin, the *maker* of the Arab ‘world’.

What concerns us, at this stage of our research, is not to attribute analogy to comparison, but to emphasise the integration of the work of critics of rhetoric with that of *fuqahā*’ (jurists), syntacticians and theologians in the field of ‘legitimising the legitimiser’ – *al-tashrī‘ li-l-musharri‘*

(i.e., legitimising the decisive role of reason – *al-‘aql*): indeed, scholars of rhetoric did in their field – the field of literary criticism in particular – exactly as colleagues in *fiqh* (jurisprudence), syntax and *kalām* (theology); thus, they constituted ‘the literary taste’ in Arab culture, through regulating and codifying rhetorical discourse and setting its criteria, and these criteria corroborate analogy in a twofold manner: for on the one hand, they stipulate that the rhetorical discourse of the *bayān* should be based on comparison or likeness, because comparison, in their opinion, ‘accords precedence among poets and reflects the eloquence of the rhetoricians’,³³ and ‘comparison is analogy’ according to al-Jurjānī; while on the other hand, they also stipulated that it be compared to ‘previous example’ – as expressed by al-Shāfi‘ī – in such a manner that would inspire the poet of the original model, which is the poetry of the Jāhilīyah, to use it as analogy for content and form.

Hence ‘innovativeness’ (*al-ibdā‘*) was considered to be generation: that ‘a poet extracts a meaning from the meaning of a poet who came before him, or adds to it’³⁴ in a way that does not take the new meaning out of its limits and its significations. Consequently, renewal was considered to be adherence: when ‘a theologian encounters a meaning invented by another, and he utilise it eloquently as is’.³⁵ As for every other matter, it is considered to be an (unacceptable) innovation (*bid‘ah*), and *bid‘ah* is not subsumed under the fundamental source principles (*al-uṣūl*), it is considered to be ‘an aberration’ . . . namely, a deviation from the (straight) path.

* * *

In the last three chapters we have dealt with the role of the ‘pure’ Arab-Islamic heritage in the formation of Arab reason, and we concluded the first chapter by emphasising the sensate-tangible and a-historical character of the perception of the Arabic language concerning the world, for it was engendered and has yet to cease to be intrinsically influenced by the world of the ‘Bedouin’ who lived during that period of time considered the ‘pre-history’ of Arabs, the world of ‘Bedouin roughness’ and ‘Arab naiveté’ (*sadhājat al-‘urūbīyah*) in the expression of Ibn Khaldūn. While in the present chapter and the previous, we focused our attention on pure and authentic Arab scholastic works, in regard to syntax, *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *kalām* (theology), and rhetoric, seeking the nature of the mental act which underpins epistemological production in it.

We can now confirm that Arab discourse in the above-mentioned fields

of knowledge is constituted by a single rational act, that is, a single mental mechanism predicated on combining the branch with the root on the basis of a certain correspondence between them: it is *analogy* (*qiyās*) as expressed by syntacticians and *fuqahā'*, or the deduction of the unseen/absent (*al-ghā'ib*) through the evident/witnessed (*al-shāhid*) – as expressed by theologians – and comparison (*al-tashbīh*) as expressed by rhetoricians. This implies that there is one epistemological principle, namely a sole epistemological order, underlying theoretical production in Arab-Islamic knowledge and science. And since this epistemological system is based, as previously indicated, on connecting the branch to the root, that is, by the same mechanism that establishes the Arab *bayān* (comparison) we will hereafter call it: the epistemological order of the *bayān*.

As for the nature of this rhetorical system of the *bayān* as a rational/cognitive act, and the nature of the outlook it engenders, as well as its relation with other epistemological systems which might have been known to Arab culture, all these issues we will address in the second part of this book. Now that we have completed exploring the method of theoretical production in 'pure' Arab-Islamic heritage, we will cast a glance at the 'reasonable' content of within it, and this will constitute our path to the 'ancient heritage' which was inherited by Arab culture from previous civilisations, in order to identify the form or forms of its presence in them, and the kind of system or epistemological systems that it engendered within them.

Notes

1. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, p. 1046.
2. Al-Ash'arī, *al-Ibānah*, p. 20.
3. See the introduction written by Prof. Shākir for the edition he edited for al-Shāfi'ī's letter, p. 6.
4. See the text of the letter in: al-Nashār, 'Alī Sālmī and al-Ṭālibī, *Aqā'id al-Salaf* (Alexandria, 1971).
5. For instance, see discussion of Fawqīyah Ḥusayn Maḥmūd for this issue in the introduction she wrote for the edited version of *al-Ibānah*. ed. 1, p. 73 onwards.
6. 'Amārah, Muḥammad, *Rasā'il al-'Adl wa al-Tawḥīd* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1971), part. I, pp. 96–97. It includes treatises of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, al-Qāsim al-Rassī, al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār and al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā.
7. Al-Jāḥiẓ, among others, in his letters refers to the Ḥashawīyah literally meaning the 'stuffers' – a pejorative directed towards the *ahl al-ḥadīth* implying that they 'stuffed' their religion with chaff or spurious narrations about the Prophet. [Editor.]
8. 'Abd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī, *al-Muḥiṭ bi-l-Taklīf*, ed. 'Umar al-Sayyid 'Azmī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyah li-l-Ta'līf, 1965), p. 167.
9. Al-Ḥanbalī, Abū Ya'la, *al-Mu'tamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, ed. Wadī' Zaydān Ḥaddād (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq), p. 41.

10. We will deal in Chapter Three (part II) with aspects of *istidlāl bi-l-shāhid ‘alā al-ghā’ib* according to scholars, *uṣūlīs* and syntacticians.

11. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, p. 1046.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 1047.

13. Al-Afghānī, Sa‘īd, *Uṣūl al-Naḥw* (Damascus: University of Damascus, 1965), p. 78.

14. Ibn Jinnī, *al-Khaṣā’iṣ*, vol. 1, pp. 48–53.

15. Published by Sa‘īd al-Afghānī, together with ‘al-Aghrāb fī Jadāl al-A‘rāb’ for Ibn al-Anbārī in one volume (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1971).

16. Ibn al-Anbārī, *Luma‘ al-Adillah*, p. 80.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–85

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–95

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 105–110.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

21. Al-Afghānī, *Uṣūl al-Naḥw*, pp. 105–106.

22. Al-Sakkākī, *Muftāḥ al-‘Ulūm* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah), p. 182.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

25. Chapter Four.

26. Al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 3, p. 818.

27. Al-‘Askarī, Abū Hilāl, *Kitāb al-Ṣinā‘atayn* (Cairo: ‘Īsā al-Ḥalabī, 1952), p. 231.

28. Al-Bāqillānī, *I‘jāz al-Qur‘ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1954).

29. Al-Sakkākī, *Muftāḥ al-‘Ulūm*, p. 161.

30. Al-Jurjānī, ‘Abd al-Qādir, *Asrār al-Balāghah*, ed. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah), pp. 127–130.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

32. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-Sā‘ir*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥūfī and Badawī Ṭabānah (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah, 1962), pp. 87 and 83.

33. Al-Rummānī, ‘al-Nukat fī I‘jāz al-Qur‘ān,’ in *Thalāth Rasā‘il fī I‘jāz al-Qur‘ān*, ed. by Muḥammad Khalaf-Allāh and Muḥammad Zaghlūl Salām (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif), p. 74.

34. Ibn Rashīq, *al-‘Umdah*, vol. 1, p. 176.

35. Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘, *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr*, p. 475 cited in ‘Aṣfūr, Jābir, *al-Ṣūrah al-Fannīyah fī al-Turāth al-Naqdī al-Balāghī* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfah for publication, 1974), p. 110.

CHAPTER 7

The Religious ‘Rational’ and the Irrational of ‘Reason’

In the previous three chapters we have presented the construction of Arab reason from within the pure Arab-Islamic locus, the locus of *al-bayān* (explication) as codified and corroborated by the sciences of linguistics and the sciences of religion. And in all of these chapters, and throughout the stages we have covered thus far, on our way to determining the components of the Arab reason within this locus, we have focused all our attention on the purely epistemological side, namely the mechanism of thinking and the method employed in theoretical production in the Arab-Islamic sciences. We have remained silent concerning the *content* of this thought, the rational conceptual content in these sciences, and in particular in the field of theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*), which was in fact the most important and broadest of fields among that which we have termed ‘Arab-Islamic rationalism’. In other terms, we discussed in the preceding three chapters the mental act in the Arab *bayān* but have not discussed what determines *rationality* in this rhetoric.

On the other hand, the process of ‘legitimation of the legitimiser’ – the codification of opinion (*al-ra’y*) and the connection of analogy or *al-qiyās* with a precedent – the pivot about which we moved in the locus of the Arab *bayān* – whether in terms of syntax, *fiqh*, theology, or rhetoric (*al-balāghah*), does not enter into the sphere of ‘action’, the act developing and emanating from Arab reason, but it consisted in most cases either of a chain of reactions for the purpose of self-defence against an extrinsic opponent at times or the restoration of internal balance which was upset

due to internal conflicts. The codification of the language was a reaction against the spread of solecism, namely against another ‘language’ or even ‘languages’ threatening the Arabic language and consequently the entire locus of the Arab *bayān*. And the codification of opinion within *fiqh* was a reaction against its increasing prominence and the emergence of some exercises in *ijtihād* and the application of discretion (*istiḥsān*) which threatened to exceed the fundamental *uṣūl* themselves; in the legitimisation of the reason within theology was a reaction against other ‘legitimisations’ of the reason belonging to other cultures the logic of which was in contradiction with that of the Arab *bayān*. In all these spheres wherein Arab reason was operative, there was ‘another’ menacing the Arab *bayān* or at least distorting the perception within, where self-defence was essential as was the restoration of balance and the ‘clarification’ of the perception. As for this ‘other’, it was the so-called ‘ancient legacy’ (*al-turāth al-qadīm*), comprised of the structures of creeds and cultures prior to Islam, and which emerged during the time of codification in the form of a philosophical and scientific heritage.

In fact, the culture to which Arab reason belongs, in which it developed and in which it exercised its effects, was Arab-Islamic culture – in the comprehensive sense – and was not restricted to the locus of the *bayān* as previously discussed in the preceding three chapters. The Era of Codification, which is the referential authority of Arab reason, was subject to other intellectual activities, vociferous and far-ranging, sometimes forming distinct circles for itself, and sometimes interlinked ones – categorising the ancient heritage and attempting to consecrate or enter into record some of its aspects, if not for the Arab *bayān* as a whole, then at least for its creedal aspects.

On the one hand, there were theological debates, where some participants used to draw their propositions from the ancient legacy to posit them as a substitute for the Islam of the Arab *bayān* or as a cultural basis for the new state – the Arab-Islamic state. On the other hand, translation had transferred into the Arab-Islamic cultural space other sciences and knowledge different in terms of subject and methodology from Arab-Islamic linguistic and religious sciences – sciences (or knowledges) which were designated with particular and highly indicative names such as ‘sciences of the non-Arabs/Persians’ (*ʿulūm al-aʿājim*), as opposed to ‘sciences of the Arabs’ (*ʿulūm al-ʿarab*), or ‘sciences of the ancients’ (*ʿulūm al-awāʾil*), as opposed to the ‘sciences of the religion’ (*ʿulūm al-dīn*), or ‘rational sciences/knowledges’ (*al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqlīyah*), as opposed to the ‘transmitted knowledges’ (*al-ʿulūm al-naqlīyah*).

Thus, we remained silent in the preceding three chapters about two of the essential determinants of Arab reason: the Arab religious 'rational' on the one hand, and the ancient heritage on the other. In actual fact, we remained silent about the first aspect because we were compelled to do so, temporarily, in regard to the second aspect because it was not admissible to integrate them into a single discourse covering simultaneously the methodology of research within the Arab-Islamic sciences. It is true that these three aspects are interrelated and that they codefine each other, which is what renders all of them a single whole, but one which must inevitably – due to the constraints of discourse – be discussed in discrete parts.

Therefore, we will proceed with our discourse concerning the whole in several stages, so that we are able to bring the substance of its unity into focus and in order to redirect our discourse towards it as a whole, as then and only then will such be possible.

Qur'ānic Considerations

What and how is rationality (*al-ma'qūliyah*) determined within the Arab *bayān* and Islamic 'theology'?

The fact is that the Arab *bayān* as Islamic 'theology', or in other words, the Arab discourse in the Islamic creed, did not begin with the '*mutakallimūn*' who responded to what had emerged in terms of ancient beliefs which may be subsumed within the wide locus of the ancient legacy as previously defined, but the Arab *bayān* in this sense finds its actual beginning, and at the same time its apex, with the Qur'ān. Therefore, rationality in the Arab *bayān* is delimited first and foremost within Qur'ānic 'discourse' and precisely in the dialectic of the rational and the irrational within its address.

We will identify, first of all, the substance of this dialectic, its points of departure and the nature of its horizons.

The dialectic of the rational and the irrational in the Qur'ānic rhetorical discourse takes the form of a struggle between *al-tawḥīd* (Islamic 'monotheism') and *al-shirk* ('polytheism') or the ascription of *partners* in the worship of Allāh. And the Qur'ān presents the entirety of human history as though it is the history of this conflict. From Adam, the forefather of mankind, up until Muḥammad – the seal of the prophets and messengers – all prophets and messengers engaged in a bitter struggle with their peoples for the sake of adopting the creed of *al-tawḥīd* (monotheism) which can be summed up as not worshipping any god along with Allāh.

From this standpoint the ‘rational’ in the Qur’ān was defined in contradistinction to the ‘irrational’: that is, because *al-shirk* consists *per se* of a contradiction unacceptable to the ‘reason’ as ‘If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allāh, they would have been corrupted’ (*al-anbīyā’*; Q 21:22). The opposite of *al-shirk*, that is, *al-tawḥīd*, is alone acceptable. Hence, the Qur’ān presents the struggle of the prophets and messengers as a struggle for the purpose of spreading the discourse of the (rational) ‘reason’ – (*al-‘aql*) – and rendering it preponderant, rather, making it predominate over the discourse of the (irrational) ‘reasonless’ (*al-lā‘aql*) which is the discourse consecrating polytheism (*al-shirk*).

In this conflict, which engaged all of the human past in its entirety, the struggle of the prophets triumphed, and the word of Allāh remained supreme and ‘reason’ prevailed. However, as soon as one of Allāh’s prophets or messengers died, people would forget their message – partially or completely – and polytheism would return, as would the (irrational) ‘reasonless’ as well, this being that which would necessitate the emergence of a new prophet with the task of returning people to the straight path – the path of ‘sound reason’ (*al-‘aql al-salīm*). Thus, time breaks down into cycles of prophets and messengers, so ‘history’ begins and ends with each cycle, and ‘true history’ – which would know no other beginning until the Day of Judgement – did not begin until the arrival of Muḥammad, seal of the prophets and messengers. For that reason his message was general and comprehensive: on the one hand it is not addressed to his people exclusively, but it was an invitation to ‘all people’; and on the other hand, it did not intend to abolish former monotheistic religions, but to correct the prevailing deviation within them and to return people to the original religion: the religion of Abraham.

The religions that existed during the mission of Muḥammad, as per the Qur’ānic discourse, were four: Judaism, Christianity, Magianism (*al-majūsīyah*) and the religion of the Sabians (*al-ṣābi‘ah*). And all of them had been subject to deviation, either over time or because their partisans had distorted them deliberately. All cases, whether those of deviation or distortion, are characterised by the return to the (irrational) ‘reasonless’. Thus, the tribes of Israel to whom Allāh had granted ‘the Book [*al-kitāb*], rule, and prophethood’ and who gave them, for sustenance, things ‘good and pure’ and favoured ‘over the worlds’ were divided by schism after ‘knowledge had been granted to them’ (*al-jāthīyah*; Q 45:16–17). Thus, they distorted the Torah and said ‘Uzayr (Ezra) is the son of Allāh’ and ‘they have taken their rabbis . . . as gods instead of Allāh’ (*al-tawbah*, Q 9:29–30) so they became unbelievers and deviated from the truth. As

for the Christians who followed Jesus who was sent by God to the Jews and who provided them with proofs (*bayyināt*) and 'wisdom', blasphemed when 'they disbelieved those who have said that Allāh is *al-masīḥ bin Maryam* – (Jesus) the Messiah son of Mary' (*al-mā'idah*, Q 5:17 and Q 5:72) and 'they have disbelieved those who said "Allāh is the third of three",' (*al-mā'idah*, Q 5:73); accordingly they committed *shirk* and become a people who have been led astray. As for the Magians, the Qur'ān does not enter in direct debate with them for they were originally polytheists and believed in two gods (light and darkness), and additionally they were not among the direct opponents of the Prophet in Mecca and Medina. In any case, they had completely turned to 'the irrational': as it was well known that, in addition to their dualistic belief, they worshipped fire. The status of the Magians contrasted with that of the Christians and Jews, as it is only related to the return to 'the irrational' (*al-lāma'qūl*) and its boundaries.

Insofar as the return of 'the irrational' was more comprehensive and profound among Arab descendants of Abraham – the elder of the prophets – the debate with them was lengthy and diverse in form. These latter had returned to paganism, to the idols they worshipped and considered intermediaries and mediators with Allāh, to those people to whom the mission of Muḥammad was initially addressed, calling them to return to the true religion – the religion of Abraham, their progenitor. And discussion and debate with them and their like throughout history takes on a timeless character, as the discourse of revelation (*al-waḥy*) is an eternal discourse, so there is no difference between confronting polytheists of the past, at the time of Abraham in particular, and confronting them in the 'present' time, the time of Muḥammad. All polytheists have followed a single mode of 'irrationality' through posing intermediaries between Allāh and themselves: either from among planets, in particular by the Sabians, during the time of Abraham, or of statues and idols, by Arab polytheists whose religion used to represent the 'popular' form of the religion of the people of Abraham. Thus, the reminder (*al-tadhkīr*) in the form evidences and arguments employed by Abraham to confront the 'irrational' among his people was, at the same time, a direct confrontation of the polytheists in Mecca, especially given: 'if it is said to them: "Follow what Allāh has sent down," they reply: "Rather we shall follow the way of our fathers." And, the Qur'ān responds to them according to the logic of the Arab *bayān* which relies on analogy, simile and metaphor, as we have explained, asking rhetorically: "Even if their fathers did not (rationally) comprehend anything (*lā ya'qilūna shay'an*) and were not guided? The like of those who disbelieve

is as if one were to shout like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but call and cries: deaf, dumb, and blind, they do not use their reason (*lā ya‘qilūna*)” (*al-baqarah*, Q 2:170–1).

In fact, the polytheists of today are the same as those of yesterday: ‘they do not use their reason’ (*lā ya‘qilūna*), and thus the story of the discourse of ‘reason’ (*al-‘aql*) in the past is necessary and useful, if it is in this case a ‘reminder and a lesson’. Let us consider here, the rhetorical forms of *bayān* as presented by the Qur’ān concerning the ‘dialogue’ between the rational and the irrational in the past. The Qur’ān says: ‘And [remember] when Ibrāhīm [Abraham] said to his father Āzar: “Do you take idols as gods? Verily, I see you and your people in manifest error.” Thus did We show Ibrāhīm [Abraham] the dominion of the heavens and the earth that he might be one of those who is certain [in faith]. When the night enveloped him in with darkness he saw a star [and] said: “This is my Lord.” But when it set, he said: “I do not love the things that set.” When he saw the moon rising, he said: “This is my Lord.” But, when it set, he said: “Unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among the people who are astray.” When he saw the sun rising, he said: “This is my lord. This is greater [than the rest].” But when it set, he said: “O my people! I am indeed absolved from all that you join as partners in worship with Allāh. I have resolutely set my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, and I am not among the *mushrikūn* [i.e., those who commit polytheism].”’ (*al-an‘ām*), Q 6:74–8. The sun and the moon and all the other planets do not merit worship as they are not gods nor are they intermediaries with Allāh: they are natural creations performing natural functions: ‘They ask you concerning the new moons. Say: they are but signs to mark fixed periods [*mawāqīt*] of time for people and for pilgrimage’ (*al-baqarah*, Q 2: 189). ‘It is He who made the sun radiant and the moon to be a light, and ordained measured stages for it; that you might know the number of years and how to reckon them’ (*Yūnus*, Q 10:5). The partisans of the ‘irrational’ were not restricted only to worshipping planets and stars and believing in their divinity, but they also set up graven images and idols in order to draw nearer towards Allāh: ‘And indeed we bestowed aforetime on Ibrāhīm his right guidance, and we were well-acquainted with him (as to his belief in the oneness of Allāh, etc.), when he asked of his father and his people: “What are these images, to which you are devoted?” and they replied: “We found our fathers worshipping them.” He said: “Indeed you and your fathers have been in manifest error.” They said: “Have you brought us the truth, or are you one of those who is merely playing?” He answered: “Nay, your lord is the lord of the heavens and the earth, who

created them and of that I am one of the witnesses, and by Allāh, I shall plot a plan [to destroy] your idols after you have gone away and turned your backs”, so he broke them to pieces, all except the biggest of them, that they might turn to it; they said: Who has done this to our *ālihah* [gods]? He must indeed be one of the wrong-doers. They said: we heard a young man talking [against] them who is called Ibrāhīm. They said: then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may testify. They said: are you the one who has done this to our gods, O Ibrāhīm? Ibrāhīm replied: Nay, this one, the biggest of them [idols] did it, ask them, if they can speak, so they turned to themselves and said: Verily, you are *zālimūn* [wrong-doers], then they turned to themselves [their first thought and said]: indeed you [Ibrāhīm] know well that these [idols] speak not, [Ibrāhīm] said: do you then worship besides Allāh, things that can neither profit you, nor harm you, fie upon you, and upon that which you worship besides Allāh, have you then no sense?’ (*al-anbiyā*’, Q 21:51–67).

And the nature of the discourse of ‘reason’ (*al-‘aql*) does not differ in the past with the people of Abraham from that of the ‘present’ discourse with the people of Muḥammad: it is a discourse confronting the ‘irrational’ with the logic of experiment (*al-tajribah*) and reason, but through compellingly illustrative forms of the *bayān*: ‘O mankind! A similitude has been propounded, so listen to it [carefully]: Verily, those on whom you call besides Allāh, cannot create even so much as a fly, even though they should gather together for the purpose; and if a fly snatches away a thing from them [e.g., their health], they have no power to recover it from the fly: weak are [both] the seeker and the sought’ (*al-ḥajj*, Q 22:73). And, furthermore: ‘Do they attribute as partners to Allāh those who created nothing but they themselves are created, no help can they give them, nor can they help themselves. If you call them to guidance, they will not follow you. It is the same for you whether you call them [to the religion] or you remain silent. Verily, those whom you call upon besides Allāh are slaves like you, so call upon them and let them answer you if you are truthful. Do they have legs whereby they walk? Or, have they hands wherewith they grasp? Or, have they eyes whereby they see, or have they ears whereby they hear? Say [O Muhammad]: Call your [so-called] partners [of Allāh] and then plot against me, and give me no respite’ (*al-a‘rāf*, Q 7:191–5).

And the conflict between the ‘rational’ and the ‘irrational’ is not restricted, in the Qur’ān, to this kind of confrontation at the level of (physical) ‘nature’ alone – namely where sense, experiment and the reason of the *bayān* (*al-‘aql al-bayānī*) are pitted on the one side against (uncritical) emulation – *al-taqlīd*, mindlessness (*al-ghaflah*) and uncritical borrowing (from

traditional assumptions): but another aspect of the same conflict takes place, this time both (normative) natural and metaphysical, and with an exchange of roles. Previously the ‘reason’ was juxtaposed against the ‘irrational’ and decisive in resorting to sense, experiment and the logic of the *bayān* based on simile and metaphor. As for now, the ‘irrational’ will defy ‘reason’ in demanding that it be provided with proof (*al-burhān*), not from (physical) nature but from the *metaphysical* world: the polytheists will require a sign (*āyah*) – namely a miracle – coming to them from the ‘supernatural’ and the metaphysical, to prove to them that Muḥammad bin ‘Abdullāh is really the messenger of Allāh sent to them. The Qur’ān would answer that the metaphysical miracle was not always believed by the opponents of prophets, but rather people used to stubbornly resist and lie about them: ‘And nothing would prevent us from sending signs, except that the ancients treated them as false’, yet they were not intended as signs in and of themselves, but were in the service of intimidation: ‘We only send the signs to instil fear’ (*al-isrā’* Q 17:58). The Qur’ān relates the stories of the prophets, and it reminds the Jews and Christians just as it does the Arabs and the polytheists of the miracles particular to certain prophets in the past: thus, Abraham, for example, had smashed the idols of his people, so they wanted to get rid of him and they threw him into a fire, but Allāh said to the fire: ‘O fire! Be a coolness and safe haven unto Ibrāhīm [Abraham]’ (*al-anbiyā’*, Q 21:68–71) so he was not injured. And, as for Moses who confronted Pharaoh who gathered his magicians in order to test him – thinking he was a sorcerer like them, Allāh spoke to him saying: ‘Fear not, surely, you will prevail, and throw that which is in your right hand [i.e., your staff] and it will swallow up that which they have wrought. That which they have wrought is only a magician’s trick, and the magician will never be successful, no matter whatever amount [of skill] he may attain.’ So the magicians fell down prostrate, saying: ‘We believe in the Lord of Hārūn [Aaron] and Mūsā [Moses]’ (*ṭāhā* Q 20:67–70). However, the supernatural miracles, employing metaphysical powers, did not finally resolve the situation, as there was always some arrogant and obstinate person going to the farthest limits with the logic of ‘irrationality’ and demanding greater and greater miracles, as the people of Moses did when they said: ‘O Mūsā [Moses] we shall never believe in you until we see Allāh plainly’ (*al-baqarah*, Q 2:55).

This was the situation of the former prophets with their people, and the situation of Muḥammad with his people was no exception. His people argued with him: ‘They say: “Why does he not bring us a clear proof [*bayyinah*] from his Lord?”’, by which they meant a supernatural miracle,

one which would transcend the law of nature. Thus, the Qurʾān refers them either to previous miracles occurring in the past: 'Has there not come to them the proof evidence of that which is [written] in the previous scriptures?' (*ṭāhā* Q20–133) or to the "book" of nature asking them to consider and learn from it: 'Have they not travelled through the land, and do not they have hearts with which to understand reason [*lā yaʿqilūn bihā*] and ears with which to hear? Verily, it is not the eyes that are blind, but it is the hearts which are in the breasts that are blind' (*al-ḥajj*, Q 22:46). And, also: 'And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth have they passed by, yet they turn away' (*Yūsuf*, Q 16:105.) In addition to the past 'evidence' and that of nature, the Qurʾān draws the attention of the disputants among polytheists that the Qurʾān, itself, is sufficient (evidence) to convince those who wish to be convinced: 'Is it not sufficient for them that We have sent down to you the Book which is recited to them? Verily, herein is mercy and a reminder for people who believe. Say [to them O Muḥammad]: "Sufficient is Allāh as a witness between me and you"' (*al-ʿankabūt*, Q 29:51–2), and then the Qurʾān challenges them to come with something similar 'or do they say: he [Muḥammad] has forged it? Say: "Bring then a *sūrah* [chapter] the like of it"' (*Yūnus* Q 10:38.)

The universe and its order, the Qurʾān and its *bayān*, are the two primary sources of the referential framework on which reason is based in the Qurʾān in its struggle with the 'irrational': with the polytheists who demand that metaphysics appear in nature proceeding from the same logic that establishes their worship of planets and idols, and which is based on positing intermediates between Allāh and people, as having a kind of divine influence. The Qurʾān rejects this logic at the level of its bases and orients the attention of people in another direction: towards the universe, to inform their rational intellects – their reason – that the prevailing system is an indication of the existence of a creator, a maker, and that this maker-creator definitely has no partner, for if there had been such, disputes would have occurred between them, and the order would have been corrupted and the world destroyed.

It also orients people towards the Qurʾān, to raise their attention to its *bayān*, the miracle of Muḥammad, which is not less miraculous than that of the former prophets, because if the miracle is 'extra-ordinary' and if the miracles of the prophets contravened the ordinary, in terms of what is natural, the miracle of Muḥammad goes beyond the ordinary in terms of the language and rhetoric of *bayān*, that constitute a challenge to a nation for whom language and *bayān* constituted the arena of pre-eminent distinction and evaluation.

Therefore, the system (and order) of the universe and the *bayān* of the Qurʾān are equal, in terms of significance: the order of the universe is the evidence of the existence of Allāh and the evidentiary proof of his oneness; and the *bayān* of the Qurʾān is the proof of the prophecy of Muḥammad and a true proof of his mission, and with their interrelation and integration they both establish the Arab religious ‘rational’ against the irrational of the ‘conceptual’ which connotes, at the level of the Qurʾānic discourse, committing *shirk* (idolatry) with Allāh and denying prophecy.

The Arab religious ‘rationally intelligible’ (*al-maʿqūl*) is determined, essentially then, by three basic elements:

1. Asserting the possibility – rather, the *necessity* – of the knowledge of God (*maʿrifat Allāh*) through contemplating the universe and its system (the evidence of the witnessed for the unseen (*dalālat al-shāhid ʿalā al-ghāʾib*)).
2. Asserting the oneness of God, namely denying the existence of any partner for him, and therefore, not positing any creator or director of the universe other than him (which means – by extension – not recognising any effect either of the planets [in astrology] or witchcraft, etc.).
3. Asserting belief in prophecy, implying communication with God, and consequently with the (absolute) truth, and that such is not accessible to all people, but God chooses from among his slaves whomever he wishes to send as his messenger. And, the assertion that the Prophet Muḥammad, messenger of God, was the last of the prophets and messengers (and consequently, the contact with the absolute truth, God, is no longer ever possible, and therefore concentration must be directed towards the Qurʾān, as it alone is the repository of truth: in terms of creed and *sharīʿah*).

These three elements through which the Arab religious ‘rational’ is determined are the complete contradiction of the determinant of the irrational of the ‘reason’ that came with ancient heritage. And if the religion of the Arab polytheists, who debated the Qurʾān, reflects vernacularly some aspects of this heritage, the movement of science and the political conflicts during the Era of Codification would give much room for a broader and deeper debate, between the ‘*mutakallimūn*’, defenders of the Arab religious ‘rational’ who spoke on its behalf, and between the promoters of certain ideas and vestiges of beliefs, as well as sciences and knowledge, all belonging to the

ancient heritage which would attempt to impose itself in the name of 'reason'. And we will see later to what extent it used to speak on behalf of the reason, or even on behalf of *which* reason it used to speak.

* * *

Hitherto, we have discussed 'ancient heritage' versus 'Arab religious thought'. And before we proceed with our research, we ought to explain the significance we accord to these two concepts in relation to the classification that we have adopted here, the classification of 'rational' and 'irrational'.

To begin with, we ought to confirm that we do not associate this classification with any indication of value, as we do not cast aspersions on the 'irrational' nor the 'ancient heritage', just as we do not perceive romantically any of the 'rational' types. Consequently, we only accord those classifications what pertain to them of a *methodological* value. In fact, although we favour certain aspects of the reason and we endeavour to serve its cause, yet, not at the expense of objectivity in research and not on the basis of an 'ideal' perception of the rational and the irrational. Neither in the past nor now, is a *rational* completely free from *irrational*; similarly, there is no 'ancient heritage' that can be separated from what we have previously expressed as 'Arab religious thought', by which we meant the Book (i.e., the Qur'ān) and the *sunnah* as they could be read within their deliberative usage. This very deliberative usage is basically determined by the 'pre-Islamic heritage of the Jāhilīyah', namely, by the type of culture and the level of thought prevalent in Mecca and Medina during the time of the Prophet. This Arab deliberative usage of the Jāhilīyah was neither reclusive nor was it sequestered from what we call here the 'ancient heritage', by which we mean that mixture of creeds, religions, philosophies and knowledge accrued to the Arab-Islamic sphere through conquests and occupation of countries under the banner of the new state of Islam.

However, we believe that the Arab field of knowledge, as it was at the time of the Prophet, was neither apt nor able to sort out, through its mere internal development, those currents of thought – epistemological and ideological – which dominated the cultural scene during and after the Era of Codification. In fact, the Islamic conquests of the Arabs were not unidirectional, but they constituted a 'conquest' of neighbouring countries, near and far, and their ancient cultures – namely, the dismantling of their authority and unity, just as these also constituted a 'conquest' for the Arab field of knowledge, in its various components: namely an expansion of its spheres

and therefore a *reduction* of its authority. Just as the growth of the Islamic state did not occur gradually – or naturally – so did the Arab field of knowledge which did not develop according to internal potentialities alone; as perhaps it relied more on gains extending from the ancient heritage. And, since this field – the Arab field of knowledge – is basically a religious field, governed by the Qurʾānic text, the ‘conquest’ to which the field of Arab knowledge was exposed could not possibly have been completed, even though it enjoyed official sanction and sovereignty, except by way of ‘inclusion’: the inclusion of the Qurʾānic text as a part or several parts of the ancient heritage, and this is ‘interpretation (*al-taʾwīl*)’.

Hitherto, the conflict between Arab religious thought as determined inside its original deliberative field and ancient heritage took the form of a struggle by pulling in different directions, disputing credibility in the comprehension of the Qurʾānic text: an orientation upholding the ‘apparent’ *ẓāhir* meaning and the second the ‘hidden/esoteric’ *bāṭin*. And despite the fact that this upholding of the ‘apparent’ had mainly been intended to close the door on the ancient heritage which considered interpretation as a pretext to enter the thought of the Arab rhetorical field of *bayān*; thus, the elements of this heritage had leaked to this field under the rubric of ‘apparent’ itself.

Thus, all of the views and conceptions of those who would become known as the ‘*ḥashawīyah*’ (a pejorative term referring to collectors of *ḥadīth* who ‘stuffed’ their religion); ‘*mushabbahah*’ and ‘*mujassamah*’ (those who attributed bodily attributes to the divine) all belong to the ancient heritage, and they found their way into the context of the Qurʾānic text through adherence to the ‘apparent/*ẓāhir*’ meaning of some verses, which depend on metaphorical expression (*majāz*) adopting the same well-known Arab rhetorical styles. Adherence to the apparent/*ẓāhir* meaning of the text in this case is an unacceptable ‘interpretation’, or at least not approved, by the Arab *bayān*, which employs comparison, metonymy and analogy as we have previously clarified. Of course, this will be an argument for those who believe in the ‘hidden/esoteric’ *bāṭin* meanings and those who went in many of their explanations, if not all, to an extent not commended or justified by the internal logic of the Qurʾānic text, one not tolerated by its original deliberative usage, or permitted by religious praxis as practised by the Prophet and his Companions. And if the Muʿtazilah attempted to posit some rational explanations of the Qurʾānic text by investing the methods of the Arab *bayān*, the polemics and verbal altercations they held with the promoters of the ancient heritage led them to adopt, in one way or another, some elements, even ‘fragments’, of the ancient heritage itself,

which rendered them – in the eyes of the upholders of the apparent/*zāhir* meanings of the text – heretical, namely promoters of ideas and issues extrinsic to Arab religious thought as determined by its original deliberative usage, as introduced by the 'pious ancestors' (*al-salaf*), among the Prophet's Companions and the second-generation followers.

In all cases, then, there was some 'leakage' from the ancient heritage, and in all cases also, there was a barrier or attempts to dam this leakage. And if some have relied on the *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet, which stated: 'the Qur'ān is tractable and holds several potential meanings, so interpret according to the best of these potential meanings', which opens the door to many interpretations, others invoked other *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet, such as: 'He who theologises in the Qur'ān according to his opinion (*ra'y*) and who is correct is even mistaken [i.e., because such proceeded from opinion]'. However, the reference to this or that kind of *ḥadīth* would not resolve the problem, as a matter of fact, soon the interpretation of these conversations begin, in a way to serve the opinion of the interpreter.²

It is the Era of Codification and the 'theology' of the *kalām*, the time when the Arab conquest, political and religious, directed outside had ceased, and been replaced by 'a counter conquest directed inside, a conquest, this time by the ancient heritage in all its epistemological and ideological dimensions, thence, we will heed it more closely before discussing the paths of its movements and sways inside the 'circle of Islam'.

Ancient Cultural Stratigraphy

E. R. Dodds noted in his valuable book *The Greeks and the Irrational* that the growth of religions occurs in a fashion which resembles stratigraphy, and the principle governing this growth is often the accumulation and not substitution or replacement, as 'it is very rare that a new structure of beliefs can exist by eradicating the previous structure completely. What happens is that: either the old continues to be part of the elements of the new, an element which could remain unseen and in a state of complete unconsciousness, or they both exist together, the old and the new, competing, side by side, unable to reconcile, in terms of logic, but still they remain acceptable, at the same time, by different people and sometimes by the same person.'³

The fact is that both cases are real in terms of the growth of religious thought in Islam. This thought has also known a third situation, considered

by Dodds to be a very rare one, the case where new beliefs completely erase preceding ones. Perhaps this kind of diversity in the growth of Arab religious thought is due to the wide area over which Islam spread and the diversity of religious structures in this area.

In order to remain with the locus that affected Arab reason, where this reason had exercised its action, we can say in general that the creed spread by the Qurʾān, the creed of Islamic monotheism (*tawḥīd*) and everything interrelated with it of the epistemological order of the Arab *bayān*, completely replaced the old creeds or beliefs in all of the 'Arab countries' (the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf and Yemen), North Africa and Andalusia. In all these countries, old beliefs, which preceded Islam, faded away, immediately following the period of settlement after the conquests, or shortly thereafter, and therefore they were not introduced as elements of the new religion (excluding of course the Jewish and Christian groups which remained as independent religious and social entities seeing that Islam recognised their religions). Despite the fact that Hellenistic or Greco-Roman thought, which constituted a broader sector of the ancient heritage than we are discussing, was founded primarily in Alexandria, and despite the fact that the early translations also were initiated from Alexandria (with Khālid bin Yazīd bin Muʿāwīyah) and some aspects of the ancient heritage expressed themselves in Egypt at an early stage, despite all this, the presence of the ancient heritage within them after the conquests was very weak. The 'ancient heritage' had moved – scholars and books – to Antioch and then to Harran before moving on to Baghdad. Thus, Syria, Iraq and Persia were the only countries where the two situations emphasised by Dodds above remained prevalent, and it was from within these countries that the elements of the ancient heritage and its streams would initially emanate at the outset of the Era of Codification exactly, or shortly before.

Generally speaking, we can say that the religious 'rational' alone was prevalent in the entire Arabian Peninsula, North Africa and Andalusia, and that its presence in Egypt was strong from the time of the conquest and it remained as such even during the Fāṭimid caliphate, whose political-religious ideology was based on the ancient heritage, like the rest of the Shīʿite factions and esoteric currents. In Syria, Iraq and Greater Iran on the other hand, the ancient heritage continued to exist within the structure of the new religious beliefs enshrined in Islam, either as veiled and unconscious elements, or as currents struggling for existence with the religious 'rational', the Arab *bayān*, until it was integrated in one form which is the Shīʿite thought and all the esoteric streams associated with it such as Islamic mysticism (Sufism) and the philosophy of

illumination, and all the marginal schools of thoughts derived from it.

This simple topography of the distribution of the ancient heritage should not prevent us from seeing the interpolation of the strata and the extension of its trends beyond its genuine origins. If the Islamic conquest had completely 'wiped the slate clean' – after it had settled – over the entire Arabian Peninsula, North Africa and Andalusia, thus, of the ancient beliefs that were prevalent in those countries prior to Islam or marginalised them to the point of extinction, which permitted the religious 'rational', the Arab *bayān*, to become established and rooted, the political conflicts that were ongoing at the level of the Islamic world had served to impel to these countries' elements and trends of the ancient heritage – Oriental – to be utilised for the same political goals; that is, as epistemological material for the Islamic ideologies opposed to the central authority, which had most often upheld the religious 'rational' of the Arab *bayān* as an official ideology. Although these elements and trends belonging to the ancient heritage were often limited and isolated, the reactions these raised among those speaking in the name of the religious 'rational', in particular the *fuqūhā'*, were strong, and mostly expressed by steadfastness and rejection, which connoted increased adherence to the logic of the Arab *bayān* and abandonment of everything else. That is, in fact, the only 'historical' role of the prevailing trends from these countries.

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How will we deal with the stratigraphy of this 'geological composite' formed by the ancient heritage in Arab-Islamic culture?

It is often said that the nature of the subject determines the form of methodology. This is true, but we must add that methodology also affects the conceptualisation of the subject. Thus, the methodology introduces the subject in a certain form; accordingly, we acquire from it a certain idea of its nature. What we call here the ancient heritage does not interest us in itself, in the way it interests the historian of ideas for instance, but for how it has affected and contributed in the formation of Arab reason. Consequently, we will focus on its epistemological aspect, particularly the order or systems of knowledge it establishes. On the other hand, what should attract our attention even more are those elements, or trends, which had effective and continual presence in Arab-Islamic culture, as these will have the greatest impact on this culture and subsequently on the reason formed within it.

All these considerations compel us to perceive the ancient heritage from within Arab culture as a first step: how was it classified by the ‘official’ representatives of this culture, namely, those who upheld the religious ‘rational’ and spoke through it and gauged things according to it? Then, what kind of knowledge did they have of it and what was their reading of it, and what was their position towards it as a whole or in parts? Knowledge of the ancient heritage from within the Arab culture as such will enable us to discover the elements or trends that had a presence in and influence on Arab reason, which will place us before the necessity of identifying these elements and trends *as they are in their essence*, that is, in light of what contemporary scientific research provides us. This is the second step, which is essential in order to detect the kind of system or systems of knowledge establishing those elements and trends. The third step will follow on from this, researching into the positions of any of these systems of knowledge in Arab-Islamic culture, which were established within the ancient heritage, to persist in a state of competition or struggle or coexistence with the epistemological system of the Arab *bayān*, the positions of which we delimited in the previous two chapters.

We will begin with the first step, since it consists of the second section of this chapter inasmuch as it will introduce to us the irrational of ‘reason’ within the ancient heritage as determined from the viewpoint of the Arab religious ‘rational’. The second and third steps will be explored in later chapters.

Needless to say, perception of the ancient heritage from within the locus of the Arab religious ‘rational’ will be founded on the categories of this *rational* and comparison with it; moreover, our authoritative point of reference should meet these conditions. And if, unfortunately, we have lost the early Arab writings that introduced the ancient heritage, in the form of ‘histories’ or responses, the *Fihrist* (lit., *The Index* which catalogued extant books – many of which are now lost) of Ibn Nadīm provides us with an important discovery of what was translated at his time (before the year AH 377), translations of writings including the ancient heritage, in terms of philosophy, sciences and religious doctrines. It was sufficient for him to enumerate the titles of the books and names of the authors and translators, without concern for content. While Ibn Ḥazm focused on responding to dissentients in his book *Al-Faṣl fī al-Millal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal* (*The Decisive Statement in Denominations, Heresies and Sects*) he consequently presented only matters that he intended to rebut, thus, the analysis provided by al-Shahrīstānī in his *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (*Denominations and Sects*) is actually the most comprehensive and accurate book which has

come down to us, in addition to the fact that it is characterised by something of a commitment to objectivity and neutrality. It is also committed to the principle we have specified before: viewing the ancient heritage from the perspective of the Arab religious 'rational', at least in terms of classification and categories. For all those reasons in aggregate, we will consider the presentation of Abū Faṭḥ Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī (d. AH 548) the basic vantage point from which we will survey the strata of the ancient heritage as they were categorised within the locus of the Arab *bayān*.

Al-Shahristānī was fully conscious and aware of the issue of methodology which has preoccupied us here; therefore, the main issue he raised to be discussed in the five prefaces of his book revolves around one concern: how to deal with the subject? The subject raised by al-Shahristānī was broader than the one which we are discussing, for it includes besides the ancient heritage in its different categories, the Islamic sects themselves. Therefore, he had to 'determine the rule underpinning the enumeration of the Islamic sects', set a general principle to establish the classification of 'doctrines of the peoples of the world among the priests and functionaries of religions and denominations and the people of heresies and creeds'.⁴ Of course, given that he is an Ash'arite theologian, it is normal that this principle should emanate out of a single referential framework, which is what we call here the religious 'rational' of the Arab *bayān*. And, as we have noted before, it will serve our case greatly.

Al-Shahristānī says: 'The correct classification revolving around the denial and confirmation (in the classification of 'the doctrinal schools or *madhāhib*, of the people of the world') is when we say: that the people of the world have been divided in terms of doctrinal schools into the people of religions and the people of the arbitrary heresies (*ahl al-ahwā'*).'⁵ And al-Shahristānī explains the epistemological principle governing this classification: 'When a person adheres fervently to a belief (or creed), and he makes an assertion, then he is either benefiting from other than himself or asserting his opinion. Thus, the one benefiting from other than himself is an obedient Muslim, and the religion is obedience and the obedient Muslim is the pious and religious person, whereas the arbiter of opinion is a creative innovator.' This is from the standpoint of principle, yet the Arab religious 'rational' does not perceive 'Islam' and 'religion' and 'obedience' as submission to tradition and the disengaging of the reason, or else it would forfeit its identity as a 'rational', and therefore al-Shahristānī endeavours to confirm that the 'beneficiary' should benefit through 'reason' (*ʿaql*) and that the 'arbitrariness of opinion' could be admitted to a certain

extent, provided that it were grounded on a 'beneficial' source. On this basis, the incongruence occurs in between those of the absolute arbitrary opinion: 'they are the deniers of prophecies such as philosophers, Sabians and Brahmins'; and between the beneficiaries: 'they are believers in prophecies'.⁵ These latter are of two kinds, 'those who have an incontestable book such as the Torah or the Gospels . . . and those who have what resembles a book [of scripture] such as the Magians and Manicheans.'⁶ It is clear that al-Shahristānī drew his inspiration for this from the classification contained in the Qur'ān, and in particular the following verse: 'Verily, those who believe [among the Muslims] and the Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians, and the Magians, and those who take partners in worship [i.e., commit *shirk*/idolatry], verily, Allāh will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection' (*al-ḥajj*, Q 22:17). And in order to achieve full concordance with the classification contained in this verse, al-Shahristānī subsumed the philosophers and Brahmins under the category of Sabians. Thus, this 'rational' classification is beneficiary also of the 'fundamental source' which is the prerequisite condition for its veracity within the locus of the religious 'rational', of the Arab *bayān*.

In fact, the principle credal trends of belief in the ancient heritage, especially those that imposed their presence during the Era of Codification, are actually those enumerated by al-Shahristānī: Judaism, Christianity, Magianism, Manicheanism, Sabianism, philosophy and Brahminism: how, then, was the status of these currents or doctrinal schools delimited within Arab-Islamic culture, and what was their general content?

Certainly these currents, taken in aggregate, constitute 'the other' for Islam, seeing that their positions were determined on this basis, in principle, but in reality, the determination of their positions was set according to their position *vis-à-vis* Islam, credally and politically.

Concerning Judaism and Christianity, it can be said in general that they were not considered a threat to Islam, neither in terms of creed nor politics. Thus, Islam recognised the self-determination of Jewish and Christian groups within Islamic society, and it set clear limits between itself and these groups in terms of creed; these limits were delineated by the Qur'ān itself, in a manner leaving no room for interpretation. And this is what we intend to confirm, that it was not possible for any opposition movement within the Islamic sphere to adopt, in one way or another, suppositions or ideas coming out of Judaism or Christianity, as the differentiation here was clear and complete.

It is true that the syncretic interpolations known as *isrā'īlīyāt* – which are in general apocryphal accounts of the unseen and of heaven and hellfire derived from the Torah and Talmud – seeped into Arab-Islamic culture extensively and into the locus of the Arab religious 'rational' itself, but these were accepted, when they were accepted, as belonging to 'transmission [of tradition] (*al-naql*)' and *not* to 'reason (*al-'aql*)', consequently as being details of the outlines existing in the Qurʾān. Hence, the *isrā'īlīyāt* would convey to the Arab religious thought the history of what came before and after its history: the history of the life of the world, and that of the afterlife. It is the 'unseen' (metaphysical world) which would become the subject of the detailed 'knowledge' after it had been consigned – in the Qurʾān – to God alone. Undoubtedly, the circulation of *isrā'īlīyāt* among scholars as well as among the public would make the 'unseen' an essential element in the outlook of the Arab reason, even one of its fortifying components. In fact, we do not deny that belief in the unseen is one of the pillars of Islam, but there is a difference between believing in 'Allāh and His angels and His Books and His messengers and the Last Day' (*al-nisā'* Q 4:136) as a whole, as required by the deliberative scope of the Qurʾānic text, and between *living* the metaphysical 'life' of the unseen, in its entities and particulars and all other such issues as related by the *isrā'īlīyāt* and far exceeding the scope in which the Qurʾān propounds such matters. However, despite all the efforts of the many exegetes and scholars of *ḥadīth* to save Islamic beliefs from intermixed and intercalated *isrā'īlīyāt*, these have remained, to date, an inexhaustible source of Arab religious thought of the irrational, in particular among the general public and within popular religious culture in Arab-Islamic societies.

Nevertheless, the *isrā'īlīyāt* did not belong to the realm of the irrationality of the 'reason' which concerns us here, as it used to present itself, as we previously said, as parts of 'transmitted (tradition)' (*al-naql*) and not the 'reason' and therefore its influence in the formation of the Arab reason will be, despite the '(metaphysical) unseen' element we have just depicted, less than that of other currents of the ancient heritage, which were presented as part of the discursive 'reason'. Thus, if we leave aside the *isrā'īlīyāt* and agree with al-Shahristānī that 'the views of Hindus' were mostly of 'Sabian doctrines and methodology',⁷ in particular concerning the main debate raging among them, and their followers among those who were influenced by them, namely, the issue of *prophecy*. If we do so, we will restrict the 'classifications' of the ancient heritage that were in opposition to the Arab religious 'rational' to three main categories: 1) the beliefs of the Magians and Manicheans and their offshoots, 2) the doctrinal

schools of the Sabians, 3) the doctrinal schools of the philosophers. We will now direct our attention to these three categories.

The Manichean Threat

Al-Shahristānī decides that if ‘monotheism is one of the most particular characteristics of Ḥanafīyah’ (monotheists) then ‘dualism is particular to Magians as they affirm two ancient sources propounding the division between good and evil, beneficence and harm, righteousness and corruption, calling one of them the light and the other darkness, and in Persian *yazdān* and *ahriman*.’ And he summarises the content of the general dilemma around which revolve the assertions of various subgroups of the Magians, saying: ‘All matters of the Magians revolve around two bases: the first is indication the reason behind the intermingling of light with the darkness, and the second is the indication of the reason behind the salvation of the light from the darkness, so they rendered the intermingling the first principle, and the salvation as the point of return/resurrection [*maʿād*].’ However, al-Shahristānī distinguishes between ‘the original Magi’ to whom is attributed a kind of ‘monotheism’ (*tawḥīd*) because they ‘claim that the two fundamentals cannot be both uncreated and eternal but that light is uncreated whereas the darkness is created’ and the dualists (basically Manicheans) who are ‘the people of the dual uncreated, claiming that *both* light and darkness are uncreated and eternal’,⁸ and therefore, the legal status of the Magians within the Islamic community was different from that of the Manicheans. Al-Shahristānī seeks justification for this situation in the fact that Magians had ‘what resembled a book’: ‘the scrolls [*ṣuḥuf*] that were sent down to Abraham were raised up to the heavens when the Magians appeared, and therefore it is admissible to conclude contracts and grant protection to them and to treat them in a manner similar to the Jews and Christians as they are people of the Book [*ahl al-kitāb*], yet it is forbidden to intermarry with them or eat what they slaughter as the scripture had been raised up from them’.⁹

In any case, the historical status of Magianism and Manicheism, within Islamic society, had been determined by their political and creedal positions *vis-à-vis* Islam as a state and religion. Thus, while the followers of vestiges of ancient Persian religions, who are all called the ‘Magians’ (*al-mājūs*) according to Islamic terminology, were secluded, forming small scattered groups and in particular within the Iranian lands not meddling with Islam or the state of Islam, they have been treated as a religious

minority, respectable but not influential. And while this was the case of Magians in general, the status of the Manicheans was quite the opposite. They were in fact considered the opponent of the other, for they were not a mere religious sect admitting the status of the minority and living within its boundaries and scope, but they appeared as a cultural, religious and political movement openly aggressive towards Islam and its Arab state. Moreover, they were able to attract, to a certain degree, some intellectuals and writers and some groups of *mawālī*, as well as some Persian aristocrats, thus interfering with the populist movement, and with its campaign focused on the cultural confrontation, what Hamilton Gibb called 'the battle of the books' that targeted – according to Gibb's view – the substitution of 'the Persian cultural spirit in place of the influences of the Arab traditions created within the new civil society developing at lightning speed, and their means for doing so was to translate and circulate among people books of Persian origin, to make them well-known and popular'.¹⁰ In fact, one can only be overwhelmed when informed of the list of hundreds of Manichean books and treatises translated into Arabic¹¹ in addition to the care accorded to those books by their publishers, as they were translated into Arabic, as al-Jāḥiẓ says: 'on the highest quality of paper on which is written with black shiny ink and pristine calligraphy'.¹²

The adoption of the weapon of books was a Manichean characteristic for four centuries before the emergence of Islam: it is 'well known that while Mani was preaching to people of his teachings, he was composing many of his books elucidating his views and beliefs. And the Manichean intellectuals followed this path in composing books to promote their doctrine reaching a point where Manichean literature abounded and was widespread among people in several languages including Syriac and Persian languages, then Arabic,¹³ and this is what caused Manicheism to spread across the globe from China in the East to northern Africa and southern France in the West, and a number of Manichean texts were discovered in recent decades in Chinese Turkestan and in Egypt.¹⁴

Mani Aumanis was born in CE 215 in Babylon; his father was one of the Elcesaites sect, which is a Sabian Mandaean one based in Wāsīt, Iraq. In his youth Mani was a contemporary of a reforming religious movement based in Persia which endeavoured to collect all ancient Iranian religions, especially Zoroastrianism (Mazdaism), in a well-structured and categorised book. This was how the *Zend-Avesta* appeared, the book that had been attributed to Zoroaster (Zarathushtra), who lived in the second half of the sixth century BCE. This process of unifying all Iranian religions had been accomplished on the instructions of Ardashir I (CE 214), the first

king of the Sassanian dynasty, 'in accordance with his desire to restore the glory of traditional Persian nationalism and in opposition to the Hellenistic traditions and Roman influence'.¹⁵ In addition, if we consider that the same period had witnessed, besides the spread of Christianity and Gnosticism, the emergence of Neo-Platonism and the diffusion of Hermetic writings, then it will be comparatively easier to comprehend the circumstances and factors that induced Mani to aspire to establish a new religion combining the teachings of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity; and so he adopted gnosticism, declaring himself the Paraclete whom Jesus said would be his next incarnation. As for Judaism, he did not recognise it nor did he recognise its prophet Moses. All sources agree on the fact that Manicheism was suppressed during the ascendancy of the Sassanid dynasty, especially during the rule of the Persian King Bahram I who realised the seriousness of the implications of Mani's teachings for the state, as these called people to asceticism and to refrain from marriage and, hence, from conceiving children, in order to devote all their time to pilgrimage and worship. Al-Bayrūnī said that Bahram said: 'He [i.e., Mani] has gone forth calling for the ruination of the world, thus, it is our duty to first ruin him before he realises anything which he desires', and he ordered him to be killed. However, the Sassanid state, which was tolerant of Manicheism at first, fought it later and persecuted its followers, pursuing them continuously, forcing them into secret circles, until Islam came and the Arab conquered Iraq, Persia, Khurāsān and all areas which constituted a haven for the clandestine Manichean organisations; then the Manicheans regained their freedom and resumed the propaganda for their doctrine, openly and freely. Consequently, many of them returned to their homelands from exile, and rallied in the dissemination of their teachings 'so southern Iraq, especially in the area of Babylon, witnessed a significant religious activity for Manicheism, subsequent to the liberation of Iraq from the Sassanid tyranny'.¹⁶

Thus, Manicheism had appeared as the most prominent element in the ancient heritage, competing with Islam and assailing its state, in particular during the first 'Abbāsīd Era, during the Era of Codification and the era of general cultural establishment. Heinrich Becker says: 'one can realise – today – that Manicheism and Zoroastrianism constituted two dangerous enemies for it [Islam] just like Christianity at least, and the gnosticism of Manicheism and similar sects constituted a grave and direct threat to Islam; therefore we see that the first dialectical school of thought, meaning the Mu'tazilite, acquired some of the fundamental sources and subjects of its inquiry through the struggle they had countering Manicheism'.¹⁷

In actual fact, Manicheism promoted, within the Muslim community, a kind of faith completely incompatible with Islam, in terms of religion and state. It promoted a creed asserting that the world had been engendered through the intermingling of light and darkness, which are both eternal, and this affects essentially two basic principles in the Islamic creed: the unicity of the Creator on the one hand, and creation from void (*ex nihilo*) on the other. And on the other hand, Manicheism posited that salvation (the salvation of light from darkness, i.e., the salvation of mankind from evil and suffering) could only be through 'purification', the path to which is that of asceticism in this world and suppressing one's desires, and the aim of which is the transcendental contact or communion with God. This could be considered a denial of prophecy, or at least, what would permit dispensing with it.

The 'Abbāsids realised the seriousness of the Manichean teachings so they confronted the believers and fought them without respite; al-Mahdī was the most severe caliph towards them. Al-Mas'ūdī says: 'Al-Mahdī escalated the killing of the apostates and those who left the religion due to their appearance during his time and their professing their beliefs during his caliphate when the books of Mani and Ibn Dayṣān and al-Marqīyūn became widespread as reported by Ibn al-Muqaffa' and many others, and were translated from Persian and Pahlavi into Arabic.' Al-Mas'ūdī adds: 'And al-Mahdī was the first to command the people of research among the theologians to classify the books in order to respond to the apostates . . . so they propounded proofs for the obstinate and elucidated the truth for the sceptics.'¹⁸

It is clear that the theologians enlisted by the 'Abbāsīd state in its war against Manicheism were the Mu'tazilah. At this period in time, the Mu'tazilah were the ideologues of the state. They endeavoured to spread and corroborate the authority of reason (*al-'aql*) and, consequently, the authority of the *state* – the Islamic state – which constituted the practical, socio-political, substantiation of the Arab religious 'rational'. And in order to estimate the crucial role played by the Mu'tazilah in 'fortifying' the Arab rhetorical reason and developing 'Arab-Islamic rationalism', one must bring to mind those fierce battles they waged on two different fronts: on the one hand, the Mu'tazilites were able to respond to the Manichean attacks and deconstruct their suppositions, as well as render them void by forcing them to resort to reason – the reason of the Arab *bayān*, which depends on tangible-sensate perception and empirical experiment as carried by the Arabic language, that which implies the denial of gnosticism from the first moment. And on the other hand, the Mu'tazilah were able, through

intense dialectical debates with the Sunnis, to instigate an essential and basic development within the Sunni thought itself, and this was how the partisans of al-Māturīdī and the Ash‘arites came into being. Moreover, the Mu‘tazilah were able, through this dual struggle, to absorb some aspects of the rational of the reason which was borne by the ancient heritage, among that which nourished the Arab-Islamic rational view and supported it – especially with the Ash‘arites, after they had absorbed the methodology of the Mu‘tazilah as we have described in the previous chapter – to rise to the level that enabled the reason of the Arab *bayān* to deal with Aristotelian logic and adopt its formal rules, as we will explain below.

However, the fatal mistake committed by the *ahl al-‘adl wa al-tawḥīd* (‘the people of justice and monotheism’, i.e., the Mu‘tazilah as they often described themselves) was that they tied their destiny to the ‘Abbāsīd state and its politics and they sided with it in its campaign, which still remains one of ambiguous motives, in order to instigate people, forcibly and aggressively, to believe in the ‘createdness of the Qur’ān’. This mistake led not only to their liquidation politically and their marginalisation socially and intellectually, immediately after the Sunni coup that took place at the time of al-Mutawakkil, but also, as a result, to the rupture with philosophy and the Mu‘tazilah, between the Arab religious ‘rational’ in its best representation and the rational of the reason in its highest manifestations, that which gave way to the irrational of the reason and permitted it to take over new positions within Arab-Islamic culture, and in particular in philosophy, over and above the positions it had occupied in the past.

* * *

Manicheism was only one of the three primary currents in the ancient heritage which entered into a conflict with the Arab religious ‘rational’, especially since the Era of Codification. Others were the ‘Sabian’ doctrines, and the heresies of the ‘philosophers’, according to the classification by al-Shahristānī in the sixth century AH of ‘the doctrinal schools of the people of the world’ (*madhāhib ahl al-‘ālam*).

In fact, the direct influence of Manicheism on Arab thought was limited, though its proponents and supporters were vital and active in this ‘battle of books’ and other battles of discourse. On the contrary, the ‘Sabians’ and ‘philosophers’ – who connotes the spurious pseudoepigraphical philosophy of the ‘Seven Sages’ – could impose concepts, perceptions and a particular system of knowledge on Arab culture. Since we will return to

the analyses of the doctrines of these people in the forthcoming two chapters in order to emphasise the epistemological system they founded, within the ancient heritage in the first instance and then inside Arab-Islamic culture in the second, we will restrict ourselves here to sketching the picture of the Arab religious 'rational' concerning the views of the 'Sabians' and the heresies of the 'philosophers' as all belonging to the 'other' based on 'arbitrary opinion' and the denial of prophecy, according to the (methodological) principle adopted in the classification by al-Shahristānī.

Arab sources refer, with great confusion, to two types of 'Sabians': the ancient Sabians who lived in the land of Babylon in Iraq, and the Sabians of Harran, the city of learning in the north-east of Syria. Ibn Nadīm mentions that the inhabitants of this city who preserved their Greek paganism proclaimed themselves to be 'Sabians' when given the choice by the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma'mūn between engaging in a 'religion among religions imposed by Allah in His Book' and being killed as heretics (*zanādiqah*), worshippers of idols, so they professed to be 'Sabians' because the Qur'ān had mentioned them (i.e., Sabians) along with Jews, Christians and Magians, recognising their religion. And Ibn Nadīm indicates that they used to be called 'Harranians' or 'Harranists' with reference to their city.¹⁹ On the other hand, Ibn Nadīm connects between the sect known as the 'Mughtasilah' who are in fact the Mandaens, inhabitants of central Iraq, and the 'Sabians' and, thus, he says: 'those people [i.e., the Mughtasilah] are numerous in the area of Baṭā'ih and they are the Sabians of Baṭā'ih [i.e., central Iraq]; they believe in ritual ablution and they cleanse everything they eat . . . they used to agree with the original Manicheism, and some of them glorify the stars to this date' (i.e., AH 377); then he adds: 'These people are of ancient Nabatean doctrine, worshipping the stars, and they have idols. They are common Sabians known as the Harranians and it has been said they are an entirely different people.'²⁰

Perhaps the amplest Arabic source on the 'history' of the Sabians and their homelands is the book entitled *Al-Āthār al-Bāqīyah* (*The Remaining Traces*) by al-Bayrūnī, in which we read, in a long discourse, the following: 'As for the Sabians, we have previously indicated that this is a name to call those who are genuinely associated with it, and they are those left behind of the prisoners of Babylon, who were transferred there [i.e., to Babylon] by Nebuchadnezzar II from Jerusalem; so, when they had settled in that land of Babylon and got accustomed to it, they found it difficult to return to Damascus, and deemed it wiser to remain in Babylon, and since nothing of their religion was adopted there, they heard the sayings of the Magians and aspired [i.e., were inclined towards] some of it, in a

manner that their doctrines became intermingled with those of the Magians and Judaism just like those who had been transferred from Babylon to Damascus, meaning the so-called the Samaritans. And most of this class exists in the *sawād* of Iraq [i.e., between the Tigris and the Euphrates] and they are truly Sabians.’ Then al-Bayrūnī adds: ‘The name [Sabian] could be applied to the Harranians who are the remnants of those of the ancient western religion [i.e., the Greek] retaining it after the Greco-Romans converted to Christianity . . . and they have been known by this name more often than others, even if they were called as such during the ‘Abbāsīd state in the year 228 AH, when they were obliged to conclude a pact as protected peoples, yet before that time they used to be called Ḥunafā’, *al-wathanīyah* [idol-worshippers] and Harranians.’²¹ However, al-Bayrūnī quotes elsewhere in his book from a source that considers the Sabians followers of an ancient Hindu-Persian cult based on the worship of planets, and he says: ‘The remainders of those Sabians in Harran are attributed to their homeland and they are called Harranians.’²² As for al-Shahristānī, who was interested in their views and beliefs in the first place, he also distinguishes, with some ambiguity, between the ‘early Sabians who believed in Athimon and Hermes and they are: Seth and Idrīs [Enoch], peace be upon them, and did not believe in other prophets’ and between other kinds of Sabians: those of spiritual disciplines, Templers and Harranians.²³

Previously, we focused on the homeland of the Sabians. As for the sources of their views and beliefs, Ibn al-Nadīm quotes al-Kindī as saying: ‘the most renowned and prominent among them were Origen, Agathodemon and Hermes . . . and Solon, the grandfather of Plato’,²⁴ whereas al-Bayrūnī says about them: ‘Most of them were Greek philosophers such as Hermes the Egyptian, Akademos [Hekademos], Wālīs, Pythagoras, Bābā and Siwār, the maternal grandfather of Plato and several others.’²⁵ In addition, most Arab sources confirm the similarity between Hermes and the prophet Idrīs on one side, and Agathodemon and the prophet Seth on the other.²⁶

As for the philosophical and religious views attributed to the Sabians in general, Ibn Nadīm presents us with detailed transmitted anecdotes about them, while we read lengthy analysis by al-Shahristānī concerning their most important treatises. Thus, Ibn Nadīm reports from al-Kindī that: ‘they said that the sky makes rational and wilful movements . . . and that retribution of either reward or punishment meets with the souls and is not delayed until a predetermined/known term [*ajal ma‘lūm*], and they believe that the prophet must be innocent of all blame in his soul and be free of defects in his body and he is perfect in all praiseworthy aspects . . . and concerning quickening, element, form, void, time, space and motion

they adopt the Aristotelianism of the Peripatetics and they believe in the oneness of God, indescribable and unpredictable; and consequently it is inadmissible to employ analogy (i.e., God is not indicated through analogy, and not realised by the reason) in anything related to him.' And Ibn Nadīm adds: 'Al-Kindī said that he had looked in the book read by those people, in which are theses written by Hermes related to monotheism [*tawhīd*] that he had written for his son with perfect precision on monotheism, where any philosopher would not be able, even with great endeavour, to find a single detraction or to utter anything about it.'²⁷ Al-Bayrūnī summarised their view on 'monotheism' in succinct terms, saying: 'We know nothing about them but that they unify God and they consider him far removed above ugliness; they describe him through negation rather than in positive terms such as when they say that he is not bounded or seen, he does not tyrannise or maltreat, and they describe him metaphorically with the best names [*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*]; that is, they do not make any true attributions [for God], and they attribute forethought to the astral realm and its celestial bodies, and they attribute lives, speech, sight and hearing to these and they glorify the lights.'²⁸

Nevertheless, the best presentation and the most precise analysis relating to the Sabian beliefs and their religious philosophy can be found with al-Shahristānī who emphasised their points of distinction with regard to the Ḥunaifis', that is, the practitioners of the religion of Islam, in the following three issues:

1. They say that 'the world is created by a wise maker far more sacred than being subject to discourse and we must realise our incapacity in approaching his majesty', namely that their god is not perceived with reason and, therefore, cannot be described at all. (As for his being the 'maker' (architect), this constitutes a syncretic confusion which we will see later.)
2. This god can be 'approached through intermediaries close to him, and these intermediaries are sacred and pure spiritual beings [*rūḥānīyāt*] in essence and condition and status: As for essence, they are sacrosanct from physical/bodily material . . . have been composed with purity and innately for the purpose of sanctification and eulogy . . . as for condition, they say that: spiritual beings are the intermediary causes (*al-asbāb al-mutawasitūn*) in creation (*al-ikhtirā'*) and engendering (*al-ījād*) and in the transformation of matters from one state to another . . . drawing power from the divine being and emanating emanation [*fayḍ*] onto the lesser beings . . . as for status, the status of spiritual beings are from the

[holy] spirit [*al-rūḥ*] and grace and delight and comfort and joy, are in the proximity to the Lord of the lords [*rabb al-arbāb*]: how could he be concealed?’

3. They believe in ‘purification’ (*al-taṭhīr*) and the denial of prophecy, for they say: ‘We must purify ourselves from the impurity of natural appetitive desires and refine our ethics from the obstacles of the passionate and outrageous force of appetitive desire until a certain occasion between the spiritual beings and us transpires; only then we ask our needs from them and expose our conditions and confer all our matters upon them; thus they plead on our behalf before our creator and theirs, our sustainer and theirs, and this purification and refinement does not occur unless we learn and exercise and endeavour to extricate ourselves from the low worlds of base desires with support from the spiritual beings. And the support is to plead and glorify and supplicate through invocations and prayers . . . then our spirits will be ready to draw support without any mediator, yet our judgement and that of the one claiming inspiration will be at the same level; and they say that the prophets resemble us in kind and form . . . they are merely people like us, why should we obey them and what privilege should compel us to follow them.’²⁹

We must add, finally, that the Arabic sources consider Hermes to whom those people belong, ‘the first to have spoken in the art’ (i.e., alchemy) ‘and he has a number of books in the subject . . . and he focused on making talismans and on this he has many books’³⁰; and he was also ‘the first to deduce wisdom and knowledge of the stars, as God Almighty caused him to understand the secrets of astronomy and its structure, and the points of intersection of the planets in it and instructed him in the enumeration of years and calculation’.³¹

So we here confront a powerful trend among those of the ancient heritage which occupied before and after Islam – for many centuries – a very important position in all of Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Iraq, with extensions into Persia and Khurāsān. It covered all these vast areas where the ancient heritage, as we have previously discussed, continued to compete with Arab religious thought, and attempted to contain it at other times, a current which drew from the ‘codification’ project, including translation, summarising, exhibiting, explanating and disseminating a large part of it. As for the identity of this trend, the intellectual identity, in the history of religions and philosophy, it is called ‘Hermetism’ in attribution to Hermes. And we will analyse in the next chapter the nature of this current and its origins in light of the facts of modern academic research,

and we will also emphasise in the chapter that follows the essential positions it held within Arab-Islamic culture and the epistemological system it established within it. As for now, we will have to necessarily present briefly the picture of the Arab religious 'rational' with regard to the third and last of the streams of the ancient heritage, the stream of 'philosophy', and then conclude by emphasising what conjoins these three streams and renders them the 'irrational' of reason in the view of the Arab religious 'rational', even in the view of the reason towards what is rational.

Ancient Historiography

The Arabic sources dealing with 'historiography' provide two completely different conceptions of Greek thought: literary and philosophical. The first is best represented by the book *Mukhtār al-Ḥikam wa Maḥāsīn al-Kalim* (*The Choicest Maxims and Best Sayings*) by Ibn Fātik (Abū al-Wafā' al-Mubashir Ibn Fātik) who lived during the second half of the fifth century AH.³² This book consists of maxims and platitudes attributed to some Greek philosophers and to some pseudo-personalities such as Hermes and Seth. The salient feature in this conception is the dominance of the rhetorical discourse of the Arab *bayān*. As for the second conception of philosophy, perhaps its 'most refined' representation is to be found in the *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* of al-Shahristānī.³³ Despite the conformity of this representation with philosophical rhetoric of the *bayān*, in presentation and analysis, it lacks 'historical' precision because the interference of cultural times is far more dominant than anything else, which obliges it to present a certain 'history' – somewhat peculiar and confused – of Greek philosophy, as something of 'a haphazard accumulation' of thoughts rather than being 'moments' of the thought historicised.³⁴

Undoubtedly, this kind of ahistorical 'accumulated history' was not the responsibility of Arab culture, as it was prevalent before Islam and it represents one of the moments of culture and thought during the rule of the Roman Empire. Therefore, one of the tasks of the Arab philosophical school of thought was to rearrange the relations between the parts of this 'accumulated history' in a manner so as to restore its historicity, and this task had not clearly succeeded until the time when Arab-Islamic civilisation began to decline, that is, at the time of Ibn Rushd. As we will see in later chapters, the delay in accomplishing this task was not due to the difficulty in doing so, or to Islamic philosophers not having realised its

importance, but it is due basically to the necessity of employing this ahistorical ‘scientific-philosophical’ accumulation as practised by some intellectual and political trends within Arab-Islamic culture, for *ideological* and *political* purposes, and this is that which consecrated it and developed it.

Al-Shahristānī did not belong to these currents, but rather was facing the opposite direction: he upheld the religious ‘rational’ of the Arab *bayān* and expressed his position in the best way. On the other hand, al-Shahristānī was not a philosopher like al-Kindī, al-Fārābī or Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) whose philosophy and history were centred on Aristotle, and who entirely neglected the view of the earlier Greek philosophers; al-Shahristānī even took an adversarial position to them, like that of a ‘gladiator.’³⁵

However, al-Shahristānī, who chastised Islamic philosophers for neglecting the pre-Aristotelian philosophers³⁶ and who intended to present Greek philosophy ‘neutrally’ and ‘comprehensively’, falls unwittingly into the sweep of the currents corroborating the ‘accumulation of history’ which, as we have said, he resisted. Of course, this was not his choice, as the picture he conveys was the one prevalent during the Hellenistic epoch, before Islam, and this reflects mostly the type of philosophical presence in the ancient heritage which was transferred into Arab-Islamic culture, and herein lies its importance for our discussion. We will therefore depict its most salient aspects.

Al-Shahristānī classifies the Greek philosophers – rather the Greco-Roman philosophical accumulation – into three sections:

1. ‘The Seven Sages are the masters of wisdom . . . – and they are Thales of Miletus, Anaxagoras, Anaximenes, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato.’
2. ‘The Original Sages (*al-ḥukamā’ al-uṣāl*) are among ancients, yet we have not found any opinion referred to them concerning the issues we have mentioned (philosophical: writings on divinity in particular) except for some deities . . . some of them are poets . . . and some are truncated practical encomia reclusive ascetics.’
3. ‘Later Greek Sages are subsequent in time (of the previously mentioned) and dissentient in terms of opinion such as Aristotle and his followers such as Alexander [i.e., Alexander of Aphrodisias] and the major Greek philosopher [i.e., Plotinus].’

The noteworthy aspect in this classification which is very much governed by the phenomenon of the interference of different chronological times is that it considers ‘the major Greek philosopher’, namely

Plotinus, to be one of the followers of Aristotle, something of special significance which we must emphasise here. Thus, this piled 'history of accumulation' of Greek philosophy reflects what is called, according to modern philosophical terminology, 'Neo-Platonism', which emphasises, especially in the prevailing history of philosophy today governed by Eurocentrism, the role of Plotinus in making it a single unified form, while the 'Arab' form of Greek philosophy presents Neo-Platonism to us in two different versions: the Oriental version, and the Western version.³⁷ The first includes what al-Shahristānī – and his sources – relate to the 'philosophy of the ancients [lit., those who came first]', namely the pre-Aristotelian. As for the second version, it includes the 'philosophy of those who came later': Aristotle and his interpreters. And considering the content of what al-Shahristānī relates to both of them, the assertions of the first category – or rather their spurious views (of pseudoepigraphy) – belong to the 'irrational of the reason' according to our terminology, whereas the assertions of the second category (i.e., Aristotle and his interpreters) fall under the rubric of the 'rational of the reason' to an uneven extent. It is clear that our interest here, in this chapter, is on the assertions of the first group, namely the Oriental version of Neo-Platonism, as it is associated with the assertions of the Sabians and the Manichean creed in an intrinsic and substantial relation.

The views transmitted by al-Shahristānī and related to the so-called 'Seven Sages' include a section on completely spurious attributions, and another comprising a mixture of authentic tenets and falsely attributed ones. The spurious section combines the philosophers into a unified single stream, while the mixed section distinguishes between them and considers that each of them had a particular viewpoint. In all cases, the spurious, whether in this section or the other, belongs to the post-Aristotelian – to the Platonic interpreters who were active in the early centuries of the Common Era. Thus we find Thales uttering in the spurious section views falsely attributed to him: 'the world has an originator whose attribute is not realised through reason, but who is realised through his trace effects; he whose name is not known let alone his identity'; this originator 'had originated the element in which were the forms of all existing things and known things, so every form persisting in the world emanates from that ideal in the first element'. And also: 'and from a perfection possessed of the primordial truth that originates the like of this element. Thus, what the common masses imagine in regard to the essence of the Almighty, are only images, the images of known things, but the originator is the Most Exalted, the First and the Truth in his unicity and identity, far removed

and above being described through his creation.’ Then, al-Shahristānī adds – and here we perceive the intermixing between the authentic and the spurious: ‘What is surprisingly transmitted about him is that the prime originator is *water*, he said: “water can accept all forms, and from it are created all the essences of the heavens and earth and what is in between”.’³⁸ The curious thing is that al-Shahristānī was surprised by what Thales actually is known to have said: ‘the origin of the universe is water’. As for the issue of creation, the creator and created, it is completely absent from his thinking and those of his peers, those who belong to the group of Natural philosophers.

Nevertheless, the personality who had a significant role, according to the sources, in fortifying the irrational of ‘reason’ within Arab-Islamic culture is Empedocles, described by al-Shahristānī as the ‘the foremost among the group, who had keen perception in the field of sciences, was destitute in the field of practice . . . He said:

[As for] God [*al-bārī*] the Most Exalted, his identity has not yet been disclosed; he is pure knowledge, he is pure will, and he is generosity, pride, power, justice, good and right. No forces are called as such, but they are He, and He is all these. He is the sole originator, not originated from anything and the originator of everything, when nothing was with him, so he created the [primordial] simple entity [*al-shay’ al-basīṭ*] which is the first of the primordial intelligibles which is the First Element, then he created more simple entities of this first single simple entity, then He created complicated [combined] things of the simple things [. . .] Thus, the first thing caused is the element, and the second thing caused is through the reason [*al-‘aql*], and the third is through the psyche [*al-nafs*], and these are the simple entities and mediums and what is next are the complicated.’ And he mentions that logic does not reflect what the reason possesses, for the reason is greater than logic because it is simple and the logic is complicated, moreover, logic can be broken down but the reason is unitary and it unifies and gathers the parts, so logic can not describe the Almighty except according to one description, which is that *it is it*, and *nothing* of these simple or complicated worlds, He was and there was nothing, then something and nothing were created . . .³⁹

And after this entire section of entirely spurious views, there enters the essential idea actually attributable to Empedocles to form along with the spurious views falsely attributed to him the following admixture as al-Shahristānī says: ‘then Empedocles, asserts that: the first element is simple just like “reason”, which is of lower nature, yet it is not simple at all . . . for the same element is a mixture of Love and Strife, from which the simple spiritual substances

and the complicated physical essences have been created (. . .) and he adds: when the first element in the reason illustrated what it bears of intelligible spiritual images, and the reason traced in the soul/spirit [*al-nafs*] what it had drawn from the element, then the universal soul portrayed in nature what it had gained from the reason'. Thus 'the universal nature' was characterised by 'strife' while the 'universal soul' was characterised by 'love'. And from the 'universal soul' are derived the *particular* human souls, just as 'universal nature' spawned the opposite forces of nature. And a human is composed of a particular soul and forces of nature. Yet, these forces of nature have rebelled,

as a result of their distance from the (First) Cause since it is deprived of its universals and due to its obedience to spiritual particulars, arrogant in its deceptive and perfidious world, thus it focuses on its sensate self and sating it with food and drink . . . it forgot that with which it had been impressed, that splendour, grace, psychological, spiritual and mental perfection. Thence, when the universal soul recognised its insubordination and delusion, there descended upon it a part of its particular that is purer and more honourable . . . endearing the deluded spirit to its world and reminding it of what it had forgotten, teaching it what it had ignored, purifying it of what had desecrated it, chastening it from its impurity, and this honourable part is the prophet sent in every role among roles, thus, he proceeds according to the normative praxis [*sunman*] of reason [*al-'aql*], and the first element of the custody of Love and Strife. So he edifies some souls with wisdom and good preaching and restricts others through suppression and dominance . . ., then he saves honourable souls which have been deceived by the disguise of the two mercurial natures (animalistic and vegetative) . . . then the honourable particular soul, through them, is elevated to the world of spiritual beings, thus rendering the two of them a single body in that world as they had consisted a single body in this world.⁴⁰

Clearly, this quotation has nothing to do with Empedocles except that concerning Love (Greek: *φιλία*) and Strife (Greek: *νεῖκος*), all the rest is spurious. Moreover, what attracts attention is the inclusion of the following phrase: 'the prophet sent in every role among roles' which directly evokes the philosophy of Ismā'īlism; and these spurious views of Empedocles provide the main sources from which this philosophy, or even all esoteric and illuminationist philosophies in Islam, derived their most important concepts. This is an issue we will discuss in the next chapter. For now, we will summarise the information given in this chapter.

Undoubtedly, the reader will have noticed with us that the distinction between what we called the ‘religious rational’ (*al-ma‘qūl al-dīnī*) and the ‘irrational of reason’ (*al-lā-ma‘qūl al-‘aqlī*) is justified within Arab-Islamic culture, considering that the first represents the ‘pure’ Arab-Islamic heritage as determined in the previous three chapters and the first section of this chapter, and the latter represents the irrational within the ancient heritage. In the previous pages, our task was to trace its form as determined within Arab-Islamic culture, and through the eyes of the *religious rational*. And as we affirmed at the beginning of this chapter, it was obvious, through this presentation, that each of these determines the other and is determined through it. Thus, the ‘rational’ religious of the Arab *bayān* is based on three fundamentals: the cognisance of Allāh (God) through inference by indications evidences from the universe and its order; professing the denial of any partner (*sharīk*) for Allāh in creation and sovereignty; and believing in prophecy. The irrational of ‘reason’ is determined by the complete opposite of these fundamentals: in fact, Manicheism, by believing in two principles (two gods, one of them light and the second darkness) and in purification and salvation (and so dispensing with prophecy), is expressly antithetical to the principles of Islam, Islamic monotheism (*al-tawḥīd*), creation and prophecy. The Sabians, whose views are known to the history of religions and philosophy as ‘Hermetism’, perceived God as a god who cannot truly be described, who does not know the universe or order it, which consequently leads to belief in ‘intermediaries’ to whom pertain creation, engendering existence and the conduct of matters, and furthermore it explicitly denies prophecy. All this renders such diametrically opposed to the principles on which the Islamic religion is founded. Finally, the theology of Neo-Platonism as we have presented it and as spuriously attributed to the ‘Seven Sages’, is in complete harmony with Hermetism and consequently contrary to the Arab religious ‘rational’.

Yet, including these three currents as part of what we have termed the ‘irrational of the reason’ is justified, as they all confirm the inability of human reason to achieve awareness of God through contemplation of the universe, which implies that human awareness of the universe should and ought to occur through direct contact/communion with the absolute Truth: Allāh (God). It is the ‘resigned reason’ (*al-‘aql al-mustaqīl*), the main features of which we will now identify within the ancient heritage before determining its position within Arab-Islamic culture and recognising the forms of its presence there.

Notes

1. In the Mecca of pre-Islamic Arabia, evidence supports the contention that the polytheism which prevailed exhibited a hierarchy in which Allāh was commonly understood to be the 'supreme' deity and, within this constellation, other lesser deities and idols were considered intermediaries or totems or were sometimes worshipped as a means of 'approaching' Allāh. [Editor.]

2. Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 2nd edn (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah), pp. 161 ff.

3. Dodds, E. R., *Les Grecs et l'Irrationnel* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), p. 179.

4. Al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, ed. by 'Abd al-'Azīz Muḥammad al-Wakīl (Cairo: Mu'asasat al-Ḥalabī, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 12–13.

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 36.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 13.

7. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 95.

8. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 37–49.

9. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 13.

10. Hamilton, Gibb, *Studies on the Civilisation of Islam*, trans. Iḥsān 'Abbās and others (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 1964), p. 263.

11. See list of books of Mani in *Fibrīst* by Ibn Nadīm, p. 337.

12. 'Umar, Fārūq, *al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī wa Fikr al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn* (Beirut: Mu'asasat al-Maṭbū'at al-'Arabīyah, 1980), p. 132.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

14. In 1930 many Manichean texts, including letters from Mani himself, were discovered in the city of al-Ma'ādī to the south-west of Faiyum, some even translated into Coptic. In 1945, near the city of Naj' Ḥammādī in upper Egypt, a sealed jar containing at least thirteen papyrus codices of Manichean texts was discovered. Before that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, other texts (even older) were recovered in Ṭarfān province to the north-west of Chinese Turkistan and in Kansu. These were written in Persian, archaic Turkic and Chinese. And finally, in 1970, important texts were discovered in Egypt that tell the story of Mani's youth and his religious message. See Henri-Charles, Reuch, *En Quête de la Gnose* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. xi.

15. Paul, Masson-Oursel, *La Philosophie en Orient*, trans. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'arif, 1947), p. 96.

16. 'Umar, *al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*, p. 129.

17. Carl Heinrich, Becker, 'Turāth al-Awā'il fī al-Sharq wa al-Gharb', in *al-Turāth al-Yūnānī fī al-Ḥaḍārah al-Islāmīyah*, trans. by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Badawī (Dār al-Nahḍa, 1965), p. 8.

18. Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, vol. 8, p. 293.

19. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fibrīst* (Flügel edition), p. 320.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 340–341.

21. Al-Bayrūnī, *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah*, p. 318.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

23. Al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol. 2, pp. 63 ff.

24. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fibrīst*, p. 318.

25. Al-Bayrūnī, *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah*, p. 205.

26. See Ibn Fātik, Abī al-Wafā' al-Mubashir, *Mukhtār al-Ḥikam wa Maḥāsīn al-Kalīm*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Beirut: al-Mu'asasah al-'Arabīyah li-l-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1980), p. 7. Also *Tārīkh al-Ḥukamā'* . . . Mukhtaṣar al-Zawzānī, in Akhbār

al-‘Ulumā’ bi-Akhbār al-Ḥukamā’, by al-Qiftī the beginning of the book under section titled ‘Idris’.

27. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, pp. 318–20.

28. Al-Bayrūnī, *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah*, pp. 204–205.

29. Al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, pp. 64–66.

30. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, pp. 351–53.

31. Al-Qiftī, *Akhbār al-Ḥukamā’* . . . Mukhtaṣar al-Zawzanī, p. 3.

32. See his translation in the introduction written by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī in his edition to the book mentioned above.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 185–186. Al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol. 1, pp. 119 ff.

34. What the author is suggesting – and with good reason – is that intellectual Arab-Islamic culture, whether in theology or philosophy or logic – was subjected, after the conquests and, in particular, with the Era of Codification – to a huge influx of thought and material, extrinsic to what – from the Qur’ānic standpoint – is the milieu of the Arab *bayān*. Much of this material was, as the author has noted, of the vestiges of Hellenistic culture, and in particular the Oriental strain or Eastern version of it which made its way into the Arab world via Alexandria, Aleppo, Harran and other centres of Hellenistic learning. When the period of translation and codification was initiated, many of the works which were translated were pseudoepigraphical and in addition to an admixture of authentic and falsely attributed views, these were transmitted into Arab-Islamic intellectual culture in an ahistorical form which did not reflect actual historical time or its sequential chronology. For this reason, al-Jabri has pointed out that this cumulative influx constituted something of disorganised ‘pile’ or ‘heap’ in a state of historical disarray. The result was that the Arab-Islamic world experienced different (non-chronological) and ahistorical cultural times in regard to this acquired material, where for instance, Aristotle was ‘introduced’ much later than were certain Hellenistic thinkers and writers who, in point of historical fact, came much later than Aristotle. [Editor.]

35. Al-Shahristānī has a book called *Muṣāra‘at al-Falāsifah* in which he argues Ibn Sīnā’s theology and criticises the latter for not adhering to rules of logic, Aristotle’s logic. Edited by Suhayr Muḥammad Mukhtār (Cairo: al-Jabalāwī, 1976).

36. Al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol. 2, p. 119.

37. See al-Jabri, Mohammed Abed, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah).

38. Al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol. 2, p. 121.

39. Obviously in his previous statement, *al-‘aql* means ‘*al-ma‘lūl al-thānī*’, that is, the second thing caused and not the human mind. Therefore, when he says ‘logic does not express reason’, he intends that human reason cannot comprehend God or prove his existence with logic, by considering this absolute reason as the god of creation who is tasked with the universe for the transcendental god.

40. Al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol. 2, p. 126.

CHAPTER 8

Resigned Reason

1: Within the Ancient Legacy

The ‘Official’ History of Philosophy

Exploring the strata of the ancient legacy of Arab culture from the standpoint of ancient Arab writings, places us before an amalgam of philosophical and religious opinions for which we do not find a place in the ‘official’ history prevailing today. This does not reflect entirely those conceptual admixtures which engaged the attentions of the philosophers and historians of philosophy, but rather it is due to the fact that the ‘official’ contemporary history of philosophy is *Eurocentric*; and, moreover, it is unconcerned with anything other than the course charted by philosophy from its original point of origin in Greece to Rome and to Europe of the Middle Ages and then Modern Europe. As for the course charted by philosophy from Athens to the East via the conquests of Alexander and after these until it came to rest in Baghdad, the capital of the ‘Abbāsids, this is not a matter of concern here. If Western scholars make token reference to the School of Alexandria in the third century CE, then this is only to indicate that Plotinus (CE 205–270) studied there under a personage enveloped in obscurity by the name of Ammonius Saccas before travelling to Rome where he established his famous school, whose teachings would go down in history as ‘Neo-Platonism’.

Thus, absent from the stage – the stage of the ‘official’ history of philosophy – is the other route charted by philosophy towards the East during the conquests of Alexander and after. The result ends in ignoring Alexandria

before and after Plotinus and what derived from other schools such as the School of Palestine, as well as ignoring Antioch and the extent of its influence as a cultural centre – where its rays enlightened the far corners of Syria – in addition to ignoring the other ‘Oriental’ schools in Iraq, Persia and Khurāsān. In other words, what is absent in this ‘official’ history of philosophy is precisely what we are in need of here: the history of the cultural centres in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Iran – centres that embraced the science, knowledge and philosophy of ‘the Greeks’ for a period longer than ten centuries from the death of Alexander in 323 BCE until the Era of Codification in Islam in the eighth century CE.

This ‘official’ history of Europeanised ‘ancient philosophy’ is ‘in agreement’, then, with what we termed ‘accumulated history’ in the previous chapter – permeated with falsely attributed views and imprinted with the chronic cultural syncretism presented to us in the Arabic books of heresiography (*‘al-milal wa al-nihāl’*) which exacerbated our poverty of historical givens that pertain to our subject: the origins and different groups of the irrational trends the emanation of which manifested in the Arab-Islamic culture that emerged from the Era of Codification.

It is true that many Orientalists have emphasised the role of the Syriac schools in Antioch, Nusaybin (ancient Nisibis) and Harran as well as Gundeshapur in southern Iran in the transfer of Greek philosophy and sciences into Arabic. Some of them seek to perceive an effect of these schools from other cultural standpoints in Islam such as in theology, for instance. Despite our acknowledgement – indeed, our *complete* regard – for the doctors of these Syriac schools and their students in the translation movement in Islam, we do not find in it, or at least in what it has conferred upon us, what satisfies our needs. It may have been that ‘what was taught in these schools often had a religious tincture connected to the holy scriptures and oriented towards shoring up the needs of the Church’.¹ These schools were busy attempting to determine the relationship between the ‘divine’ (*lāhūt*) and the ‘human’ (*nāsūt*) in the essence of the Messiah, and the conflict was an essential basis of that between the Jacobites (of Jacob Baradeus) who asserted the unity of these attributes and considered him to be a god, and between the Nestorians, who affirmed the human characteristics of the Messiah in terms of existence, volition and action distinguishing between these and his divine elements. Christian theologians (*mutakallimūn*) relied on Aristotelian logic in dealing with this religious problem. It is needless to say that the discussions had formed or resulted in what might be termed the Oriental Christian *religious* ‘rational/reasonable’ (*al-ma‘qūl al-dīnī*), which is far removed from the trends of the

‘conceptually/logically’ irrational/unreasonable (*al-lāma‘qūl al-‘aqlī*),² the origins and divisions of which interest us here, those trends that al-Shahristānī had discussed as the views of the ‘spiritualists among the Sabians’ on the one hand, and as the philosophy of the ‘Seven Sages’ on the other hand.

It is true that there was a school of Harran whose exponents were not Christians, retained a Greek pagan character along with a particular predilection for astronomy imparted to it from Babylon and all that was connected to such in the way of worship of the planets and preoccupation with astrology and magic.³ Harran increases in importance to our subject due its being, as we saw in the previous chapter, a centre for the Sabians whose Hermetic religious philosophy formed one of the primary trends in the sphere of the irrational in the ancient heritage – these two trends for which we want to ascertain the sources and the history of their formation as well as the underlying cognitive order which established them.

It is true that the Harranians assumed a major role in the movement of transmission and translation in Islam and in a special way in its second phase.⁴ They transferred much of the scientific and philosophical heritage of their school into Arabic, including the Hermetic writings. However, our present information relating to the school of Harran does not serve us much in regard to our subject: all we know is that it was famous at the dawn of the Common Era, and that it was preoccupied with Chaldean knowledge alongside its concern for certain trends in Greek philosophy. The most important scientific event linked to Harran is the transfer of the *majlis al-ta‘līm* (centre of learning) – both books and doctors – to it during the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil, which lasted from the year AH 232 until AH 247. Before that time, the ‘*majlis*’ had remained for one hundred and forty years in Antioch, after having been moved there from Alexandria during the caliphate of ‘Umar bin ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, who reigned between AH 99 and 101. And we know that this *majlis* did not stay for long in Harran as it moved to Baghdad during the caliphate of al-Mu‘taḍid which lasted from the year AH 279 until 289. Accordingly, study in Harran did not last more than forty years’, which is a period falling, as previously indicated, between the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil and that of al-Mu‘taḍid. Since Hermetic literature had already become widespread in Arab-Islamic culture before that date, as we will show in the next chapter, the school of Harran, or at least the ‘*majlis al-ta‘līm*’ that had been transferred there, could not possibly be the only source of Hermetism in Islam, so there must have been one or more other preceding sources. Furthermore, since the original home of Hermetism was Alexandria, as we will indicate shortly, we would

suggest that the transmission of Hermetic literature within Arab-Islamic culture occurred in two phases: during the first phase, Alexandria itself was the source, possibly along with some of its branches in Palestine. However, in the second phase, the school of Harran was the main source. Undoubtedly, all that had been transferred from Harran had its initial origin in the school of Alexandria where the *majlis al-ta'lim* had moved as indicated before.

After this there remained that amalgam of pseudoepigraphical views in the philosophy of the 'Seven Sages', and at their head Pseudo-Empedocles, a rich source from which esoteric trends in Islam drew, both in the West and the East. Nevertheless, those falsely attributed philosophical views, characterised by a clear Gnostic inclination, converge in many essential aspects with the fundamental elements of the Hermetic religious philosophy of Harran, thus, al-Shahristānī introduces it as representing the 'early' philosophical opinion, distinguishing it from the Aristotelian philosophy and that of his interpreters on the one hand, and he describes it, on the other hand, as inconsistent with the views of Sabian spiritualists (i.e., Hermetism), which he presented independently seeing that it is not subsumed within 'philosophy'. Both these facts indicate that the sources from which al-Shahristānī derived this spurious philosophy of the 'Seven Sages' is different from the sources adopted in the opinions of the Sabians of Harran. And if we go back to Ibn al-Nadīm and al-Bayrūnī, who lived before al-Shahristānī (the first by about one and a half centuries and the second by about one century) we would find them vindicating this distinction provided by al-Shahristānī between the Sabians and the wisdom of the 'Seven Sages', as their discussion about the Sabians and their beliefs become separate from philosophy and philosophers, which actually confirms that we are dealing with two different sources.

There are two other aspects to consider in al-Shahristānī philosophy and philosophers related to our discourse. The first lies in his reference to the fact that Islamic philosophers had neglected to mention the 'Seven Sages' and 'omitted mention of their theses',⁵ which implies the existence of an awareness that the philosophy of those sages is different from the philosophy of the 'official' Islamic philosophers (i.e., al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Avicenna) of whom he mentions that they 'all followed the method of Aristotle in regard to all the positions which he took and whereby he was distinguished, except for some simple terms in which they may have detected the view of Plato and the ancient predecessors'.⁶ The second interesting aspect of al-Shahristānī's presentation is that he classifies Plotinus (calling him 'the Greek sheikh') among the *later* philosophers headed by Aristotle

and considers him to be in apposition to ‘ancient’ philosophy, that of the ‘Seven Sages’.

The fact is that Plotinus (AC 205–270) is completely absent from the philosophical space in Islam, thus, Ibn al-Nadīm mentions ‘Plotinus’ among the list of the names of the interpreters of Aristotle,⁷ and al-Shahristānī mentions a verdict by the ‘Greek sheikh’, which is recognised today as implying Plotinus.⁸ As for al-Qifṭī, he calls him by his real name, Plotinus Aflūṭīn, and says that he ‘explained something of the books of Aristotle’ and that some of his categorisation had been transferred from Greek into Syriac and then adds: ‘yet I know nothing of it that has been transferred into Arabic’.⁹ In fact, the book *The Aristotelian Anthology* consists of a detailed presentation of the *Enneads* of Plotinus, but this book cannot be one of the sources of the philosophy of the ‘Seven Sages’, that is, the pseudo-philosophy as presented by al-Shahristānī. This is for two reasons: firstly, the attribution of this book to Aristotle would remove it completely from the sources from which al-Shahristānī had drawn this falsely attributed philosophy, and secondly, this philosophy, itself is substantially different from the one contained in the *Aristotelian Anthology*.

Thus, there are some sources that have not come down to us and from which al-Shahristānī drew his presentation related to the philosophical opinions attributed to the ‘Seven Sages’, and in such a situation we have only one method of research into its origins and categories, and that is through comparing it with what could potentially be its source, whether remotely or in close proximity. The connection which can be made in this case is the *structural* connection between the thoughts and not that of attributing these thoughts that inheres in the connection of pupils, in the sense that we can not attribute them to one or more particular persons, but we can – if we are able to find the way – associate them to this or that philosopher, related to this or that trend, on the basis of the *structural* relationship between doctrines. The reason for insisting on the origins of this falsely attributed philosophy is that it circulated widely within Arab-Islamic culture and in particular among the esoteric trends such as those of Ismā‘īlis and Sufis. In other words, the matter is basically related to searching for one of the primary sources of ‘conceptual’ absurdism within Arab-Islamic thought, the source that, with Hermetism, constituted a powerful trend from the beginning of the Era of Codification and which continued to occupy a major position within it until it came to dominate the entire sphere during the Age of Decline (*aṣr al-inḥiṭāṭ*). It is a period neglected by the ‘history of philosophy in Islam’ and omitted also by the official Eurocentric philosophical history which chronicles the ‘European

mind' only, the history of the 'irrational of the reason' within Arab-Islamic culture for which we must now search the origins and divisions.

How best to direct this search?

Fortunately, some relatively recent researches officially belonging to the 'history of religions within European culture' will serve us to some degree.¹⁰ Moreover, these cast revealing light on aspects of the intellectual life in two crucial centres where some of the strata of ancient legacy were formed, in particular the categories of the 'conceptually unreasonable/irrational', is the subject matter of our search, thus on the one hand providing us with a broad scientific study related to Hermetism and the date of its institution as well as its religious, philosophical and 'scientific' content, and, on the other hand, it presents before our eyes a clear picture related to Neo-Platonism in its Oriental strain where we read clearly the basic elements of the pseudepigrapha of the philosophy of the 'Seven Sages' as presented by al-Shahristānī.¹¹

Hermeticism

Perhaps the latest and most complete study of Hermetism is that made by the prominent French philosopher André-Jean Festugière who probed the Hermetic texts and translated them into four volumes which he followed up with a general study of Hermetic thought in another subsequent four volumes.¹² In this body of work, governed by 'Eurocentrism', the author discusses Hermetism as a conceptual trend within the Roman Empire on the one hand, and on the other, tries to directly associate it with Plato, in its religious and philosophical dimensions. Despite this, the work of Festugière will remain one of the greatest endeavours and most informative with regard in particular to the history of the school of Alexandria in particular and the demise of Greek rationalism in general. For our purposes, we will refer to those elements that shed light on essential aspects of the ancient legacy that we are in the course of discussing. We will begin with the demise of Greek rationalism – its causes and consequences.¹³

Festugière reviews the socio-historical factors that led to or facilitated the disintegration and dissolution of Greek rationalism in the first century CE, and at the forefront of these factors was the social and psychological disruption caused by the successive wars from the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BCE until after the rise of the Roman Empire in the first century BCE. With an emphasis on these socio-historical

factors, Festugière affirms that the disruption afflicting Greek rationalism immediately after Aristotle, when the multiplication of contentious schools of philosophy and the appearance of the Sceptics and the spread of their suppositions was one of the factors that made Greek 'reason' appear as though it were 'destroying itself'. Festugière associates this implosion of Greek rationalism with its dependence on derived conceptual structures without recourse to empirical experiment, to say nothing of appealing to it for judgement. Greek reason had forcibly constrained itself to experience (i.e., to experiment) in harmony with perceptual knowledge, depending completely on its internal dialectic, 'so it was inevitable that this dialectical power, that was characterised by flexibility, precision and penetration especially with the Greeks, and which was responsible for the structuring [of it], would undermine the very structure' it had built.¹⁴

Whether the 'critical' factor in the demise and disruption of Greek rationalism was due to the new socio-historical circumstances that accompanied the conquests of Alexander and the wars that ensued, or whether such was due to the *nature* of that rationalism itself, the alternative that succeeded it was the complete opposite: irrationality – namely, the adoption of another source of knowledge, outside reason, sense and perception. Festugière says in this regard: 'As it is often the case, along with this decline that had afflicted Greek thought came an expansion and a growth, yet not in the desire for genuine piety, but rather religious fantasy. It seems that people wanted to express with this their total submission and surrender to the power of God, expecting this to provide them in the form of inspiration and personal revelation what they acquired before through their power of reason alone. And gradually, the ancient Greek reason that had liberated scientific thought since the time of ancient Ionians from the dominance of myth and the spectre of the Hereafter, began giving way to yield the field to an entirely different conceptual situation, characterised simultaneously by a loss of confidence in reason and a reliance on alien sources of knowledge. Neither one of those phenomena is the result of the other, but they were rather reflective of a single phenomenon which is the *resignation of reason*.'¹⁵

It has been said in a Hermetic text: 'I will bring you news similar to revelation, so I will tell you that there will be no sincere love for philosophy after us, only the philosophy whose single task is the knowledge of God in the best way, which is immersed in contemplation, god-fearing piety and performing sacred rites. Seeing that many people had already begun perverting it with all kinds of sophistry they confound it with several sciences, hard to understand, such as arithmetic and musicology and engineering. But the pure philosophy, the one that only cares for religiosity and

worship, should not concern itself with other sciences except to the extent that they would constitute a partial introduction to contemplation, devotion and glorifying God creation and power (. . .) glorifying God with a heart and spirit free from any distraction and honouring his splendid creation and engaging in thankful and grateful acts in accordance with His will which is the sole good, this is the philosophy that cannot not be desecrated by any unfit curiosity of reason.¹⁶

And Festugière adds: ‘Thus Greek rationalism had committed, after it had undermined itself, a fatal error and it oriented people to irrationalism, to something located somewhere above or below reason, or at least outside its sphere, persisting at the level of mystic intuition or at the level of divine illumination and its mysteries or at the level of magic and its wonders, and sometimes, people had resorted to all those levels. Thus, people were tired of all those arguments that were only suitable to manifest reason somehow incongruous and contradictory. In the meantime while waiting to acquire direct and certain sources of knowledge namely while waiting for ‘disclosure’ (*al-kashf*), people had to proceed with and give meaning to their lives. Moreover, what they needed were instructions issued to them, and an authority to which they must submit: faith and resignation. They no longer desired evidences, they merely wanted to believe . . . they were seeking *revelation* and prophetic inspiration. That is because when God is the only one entitled to speak for Himself, it becomes necessary to ask him the question. There is no difference between Him speaking directly through an intermediary among the “knowers [of God]”, or through an inspired vision, and between believing in His messengers who were in contact with Him in the ancient past and who recorded in sacred books what they learned from Him.’ Consequently, eyes were turned towards the countries of the East – towards ‘the people who were first to see the illuminating rays of the Sun’, the Sun-god ‘which is associated purely and in an entirely direct means, with those countries that preserve their priest-hoods in their ancient temples, with strict attention to their fantastic mysteries, which they utter with voices that exert a tremendous effect and which exercise magical control simply by being uttered. And, there are many instances of the circulation and spread of this inclination towards mysticism and seeking prophecy during the first centuries of the Common Era.’

These irrational inclinations are reflected, first and foremost, and particularly in the field of philosophy, through the demand for and rise of Pythagoreanism and its renewal. Festugière asserts that ‘belief in Pythagoras was increasing in direct proportion to the extent that the authority of

reason was decreasing'. He explains that this was due to the fact that what constituted the power of Neo-Pythagoreanism was that it was *not* a philosophy, that is, not a system of integrated and harmonious ideas concerning God, the world and the human being, and thus, it did not adopt evidentiary proof or demonstration (*al-burhān*), but it was an order of soothsayers devoted to blind obeisance of the utterances of human beings receiving revelation and inspiration, unconcerned with convincing people, but rather desiring their complete submission. Thus, any discussion had to cease once someone uttered aloud that phrase which had a decisive force in the discourse, the phrase: 'the master has spoken and said'. As for this 'master', he is either God or a prophet or one entrusted [with communicating the message], and in any case, among his signs are bringing the supernatural and blessings, and consequently the possession of the truth.'

Neo-Pythagoreanism was essentially a reading of Plato through Pythagoras, which meant 'his coronation with the crown of prophethood'. However, this does not mean keeping within the boundaries where the two Greek philosophers had moved. People were demanding the ancient alien legacy that had been imported: 'indeed, if the authority of an ideology, any ideology, increases when it assumes the guise of prophecy, and when this prophecy derives its origins from an ancient past, then why not go further back than Pythagoras – to the wellsprings of wisdom close to the world of the divine, the primordial wisdom which has no beginning and no history?'¹⁷

The return to Pythagoras and those philosophers and people of prophecies and ancient wisdom who preceded him was the prevailing inclination during the second and third centuries CE in the Roman Empire and, in particular, in the eastern part – Egypt, Syria, and so forth. The outcome was that the philosophical and religious trends merged with the opinions and views of pre-Socratic philosophers, presented in a Platonic religious guise, just as we have seen with al-Shahristānī in his discussion of the early philosophers, 'the vessels of wisdom' or the 'Seven Sages'. Hence, if we are not able to directly associate these amalgamations with one or more specific figures, it is well known historically that the first to have endeavoured to construct a philosophy of this type which read Plato through Pythagoras with borrowings from the 'wisdom of peoples possessed of renown and majesty', the peoples of the Orient, was Numenius of Apamea, founder of Neo-Platonism, and in particular the Oriental version, and also one of those whose views corresponded with the Hermetic religious philosophy in many of the substantial issues, in addition to his influence on the

philosophical school of Alexandria and especially on Plotinus. Therefore, we will move to Apamea – birthplace of Neo-Platonism – before returning to Alexandria, home of Hermetism.

Apamea

Apamea was an extremely important centre of learning during the early centuries of the Common Era, located on the Orontes River to the south of Antioch in northern Syria and called today Qal‘at al-Maḍīq – the ‘Castle of the Strait’. An important Greek community inhabited this area, in addition to the Syrian population. Associated with this city and one of its sons is Numenius. Some Latin writers (such as John Lydus) have conferred upon him the name ‘Numenius the Roman’, while the French researcher Henri-Charles Peuch,¹⁸ specialist in the history of religions and one of those interested in gnosticism and its history (to whom we owe the following information about Apamea and its philosopher), sees that this curious appellation – that is, ‘the Roman’, might have been due to the confusion of some of those who transmitted anecdotes about him through a Roman source. Some researchers assert that he might have been Jewish, or at least one of the Semitic Syrians who had ample knowledge of Jewish thought. Furthermore, a modern Arab researcher sees that the name Numenius could potentially be a transliterated translation of the Arabic name ‘Nu‘mān’, especially given that it is written in some references as Noominios, where doubling the vowel after the letter ‘N’ could conceivably be an attempt at approximating the sound of the Arabic consonant ‘ayn and where the appending of the final ‘-ios’ is simply a Greek suffix. If so, the name would be very close indeed to the pronunciation of the word ‘Nu‘mān’,¹⁹ and if such were to prove true, the founder of the Neo-Platonism in its Oriental and authentic version would be the ‘Arab’ philosopher Nu‘mān the Syrian of Apamea who lived during the second century CE.

Whether true or not – the origin of the name here is based on speculations and no more – what *is* in historical evidence is that Apamea played a decisive role in the formation and spread of the Hellenistic philosophy; namely, in the development and dissemination of Gnostic trends and theories culled from Oriental cults, trends and concepts that flourished as a reaction to Greek rationalism which had already been dissolved and disintegrated, as we have shown previously.

Peuch highlights the role of Apamea as an exceptional cultural centre on the basis of the following givens. Apamea was located at a crossroads between the East (Iraq and Persia) and the West (the Mediterranean – Greece) and between the North (Antioch and Asia Minor, where the school of Pergamum was situated) and the South (Palestine and Alexandria.) Apamea had witnessed at the time of the Seleucid Empire a prosperous urban growth until the population was approximately 117,000 people during the first century CE, and it remained – until the fourth century CE – a Greco-Syrian city into which poured various influxes of intellectual and religious trends from all directions. It was thus home for most philosophers who were known for eclecticism, combining Greek philosophy with the wisdom of the Orient. In fact, Posidonius, who is considered a primary source for Hellenism, endeavoured, just as Numenius had done, to explain the demiurge of Plato by means of Oriental beliefs, and in addition, he integrated some Oriental elements into Stoic mysticism. In the third century CE, the city became a centre attracting the first generations of Neo-Platonists and, in particular, Iamblichus (also known as Iamblichus Chalcidensis; or for Ibn Nadīm, Amlichus and for al-Qiftī, Iamlichus), who established his school there, which had a decisive role in transforming Neo-Platonism into Oriental gnosticism. Moreover, Apamea was the centre for other streams of thought, Jewish and Christian, by virtue of its continuous link to Palestine. In general, Syria was at that time the traditional home for Jewish and Christian thought and for early Gnostic trends. Thus, from there had emerged the pseudepigrapha attributed to Clement, the Neo-Platonic philosopher who had converted to Christianity and worked on reconciling philosophy and religion. And to Antioch, north of Apamea, and near to it belongs Cerdo of Syria, the teacher of Mercion, who was one of the first to assert the idea of a supreme transcendent God, the god of Gnostics as opposed to the Creator-Maker God – the god of the prophets. Probably, Mercion himself had passed through Apamea before the year CE 48. Peuch elaborates on that by saying: ‘Whatever the case is, it is certain that since the days of the Roman Emperor Trajan (who ruled between the years CE 98 and CE 117), Apamea was the centre of a group of Judaised eclectic philosophers known for their inclination toward gnosticism and called the ‘Elkesaites’ or ‘Elkhasaites’. And from Apamea to Rome around the year CE 200 came the so-called Alcibiades with Elkesaite or Elkhasaite revelation permeated with astrology, and it may be supposed that this revelation was of Persian origin.

Peuch insists that Numenius had thoroughly absorbed Jewish thought in spite of his obvious Pythagorean inclination, causing him to read into

Platonism the teachings of Moses, and therefore he called him 'the Greek-speaking Moses'. Peuch associates this observation of his to a very famous Jewish Hellenistic theory which considered Plato a disciple of Jews, and considered his discourse *Timaeus* to be derived from Genesis, just as he indicates that the idea of a supreme transcendent God posited by Numenius and all of the Gnostics was an idea of Jewish origin, where it is an extension of the concept of the 'unknown' God about whom nothing can be reported, who cannot be described and who is considered by Judaism to be 'the father of all Gods' or 'the Lord of lords'.

In any case, the insistence on associating Numenius with Jewish thought should not obscure for us his open-mindedness to all streams of thought and his appeal to draw from the wellsprings of wisdom in the Orient and from all nations that possessed intellectual glory. In one of his famous texts he observes: 'With research into the matter of the deity, this should not be limited to the teachings of Plato alone, but should return to what came before, and that is associating his postulates/categories with the teachings of Pythagoras. What I am saying is there is no doubt of a return to the people who had glorious reputation for standing by their religious traditions and becoming familiar with their creeds and rituals, as well as connecting all of this with the principles of the philosophy of Plato. One should return to everything that was established by Brahmins, Jews, Magians and Egyptians.'²⁰

For our present concerns, it may be asked, what are the primary components of the philosophy of Numenius?

Numenius posits a sharp dichotomy between God and matter, between good and evil, considering them to be two entirely different natures for which there cannot possibly persist a direct connection between them which necessitates the assertion of the principle of an intermediary (*wasîf*) in order to effect an explanation for the creation of the universe. The matter therefore ends in the positing of three principles:

1. There is, from the standpoint of 'the One', who is the supreme transcendent God or *Good* itself, which is reason (*al-aql*), yet not in the sense that it comprehends the form of the world or that it enters into any sort of relation with the universe, but in the sense that it is an identity by itself, isolated, uniquely distinct and entirely *deanthropomorphic*.
2. There is an aspect in regard to matter, which is the source of deficiency and evil, and which is even evil itself; and it must be eternal (or primor-

dial) as it could not possibly issue from the supreme transcendental One. And how could evil issue from good or deficiency from perfection?

3. From this standpoint came the necessity of a third principle, that the Creator-Maker God was an intermediary between the supreme transcendent God and the primordial matter. And this third principle is a mind (*ʿaql*) oriented towards the supreme transcendent One at times and towards material substance at other times; and, out of this movement of it towards matter it makes the world, orders it and protects it. A Hermetic text says: ‘Listen to what Numenius says in his demiurge about the Secondary Cause (i.e., God the Maker): the relation between the First God (i.e., the supreme transcendent) and God the Maker is similar to the relation between the owner of a garden and the gardener planting trees. The First God had sown souls (*nufūs*) in all of all beings of the garden; as for the God the Maker, he is charged over us with undertaking implanting and distributing and re-planting the seeds previously sown by the First God.’²¹ However, God the Maker with his continuous protection of the world seems to be the ‘psyche’ (*nafs*) of the world or even the world itself. Hence, God the Maker and the world form, in fact, a unitary whole *vis-à-vis* the supreme transcendent God. Such was the dyad in the philosophy of Numenius, an inherent dualism which cannot be transcended.

From this dyad – in terms of first principles – derived dualities at the level of the whole world. In every organism there are two aspects, one representing good and another representing evil. And the human soul (*nafs*) suffers also from this dualism as long as it is still ensconced in the body where God the Maker had installed it. The human soul is originally a divine seed (*bidbrah ilāhīyah*) issued forth from the supreme transcendent God. Yet, its entrance into the body creates materialistic inclinations and the soul becomes two: a good and self-censuring soul struggling with base material desires and thereby expressing its divine origin, and an evil soul commanding evil subservient to material substance. The first is *reasonable*, and the second is *unreasonable*. The reasonable is the only one that could be in contact with the supreme transcendent God, and that is when it is able to liberate itself from the body and its base desires and consequently be free from all necessities. This is not available to everyone as only one who makes a continuous effort to purify his soul and liberate it is able to attain this level and moreover restore its unity and pristine simplicity and then to effect a return to its origin – to

the presence of the supreme transcendent God from which it drew its fire. The pathway to purification is knowledge (*al-maʿrifah*), knowledge of the soul and its origin. Yet, knowledge here is not that obtained by induction proof or the utilisation of symbols and indications, but rather what is intended here is knowledge which is predicated on separation from everything and liberation from everything; knowledge which is an expression of direct vision where perceiver and perceived are completely unified.²²

Peuch sees that this kind of knowledge (gnosticism) is considered by Numenius to be the time-honoured wisdom which should be taken from the Orient in order to impart it to the philosophy of Plato and Pythagoras and then adds: 'In fact, this was unaccepted, and could not be accepted, by Greek reason in the Oriental nature of Numenius, this is the reason that the struggle against this dualism was one of the constants in the philosophy that had emerged afterwards. And, the objection to Numenius on this point is one of the links in the chain of the struggle waged against gnosticism and its Manichean legacy by Plotinus, Proclus [Proclus Lycaeus], Heraclides [Heraclides Ponticus, also known as Herakleides] and Iamblichus [also known as Iamblichus Chalcidensis].'²³

Given this, what can we make in the way of conclusions in regard to our subject from this exposition concerning the school of Apamea and its philosopher Numenius?

If we return to the exposition provided by al-Shahristānī on philosophy and philosophers, which we summarised in the previous chapter and for which we attempted to establish a kind of connection between it and the philosophy of Numenius, we find ourselves in fact before a possible 'origin' of that spurious part, which al-Shahristānī attributed to the Seven Sages. Thus, the idea of a transcendent supreme God and the assertion of a First Element²⁴ and then a reason within which is the image of the world, then the divine origin of the soul and purification. All these are shared basic principles which we find attributed to the Seven Sages, as a whole or in part, and in particular among them to Empedocles; and these are the same elements upon which Numenius established his divine philosophy and his Oriental gnosticism.

On the other hand, the distinction made by al-Shahristānī between those Seven Sages in whom we read the philosophy of Numenius and between Aristotle and his interpreters is explained by what was indicated by Peuch from the standpoint of those who rejected Greek rationalism, as epitomised by Plotinus and his followers, of the gnosticism of Numenius and his Oriental demiurge. Thus, the classification by al-

Shahristānī of Plotinus among the followers of Aristotle was neither a coincidence nor an error: his designation ‘Greek Sheikh’ was of a certain significance in this context. Plotinus was ‘Greek’ in the sense that he was against Oriental gnosticism emanating from a spirit of Greek rationalism. Plotinus had criticised in his *Enneads* (II, 9) the Gnostics for they are not bound by the Hellenic method, announcing by this his complete separation from Numenius and his gnosticism. And, if Plotinus had relied for support in many of his views on the philosophy of Numenius, as he was accused by his students, it is without doubt that Plotinus presented these views through a Greek method, namely through ‘demonstration [by proof]’ or *al-burhān* and not by claiming ‘[gnostic] illuminationist knowledge’ or *al-ʿirfān*.

Hence, it seems clear, then, that in contradistinction to the ‘official’ history of ancient philosophy oriented from Athens to Rome, and branching from Aristotle to Plotinus then to the interpreters of Aristotle, another history could be rewritten for the selfsame ancient philosophy which complements the first without negating it, but which competes and struggles with it – a history oriented from Athens towards Apamea and descending from Pythagoras and Plato to Numenius to be transferred with his pupils and those influenced by it to all the Sufi, occultist (Bāṭinīyah) and illuminationist trends known to Arab-Islamic thought both in the Arab East and the Maghreb.

Yet, Apamea was not the only source from which this Gnostic and irrational trend emerged, so we ought to beware of the tree that conceals the forest; and we will turn to another source which was richer in irrational trends, to Alexandria, home of Hermetism.

The Alexandrian School of Thought

When Alexander died in the year 323 BCE (namely a year prior to the date of the death of his teacher Aristotle) his commanders divided up his vast empire: Greece and Macedonia were in the hands of the commander Antigonus (Antigonus I Monophthalmus) with their capital at Athens; the Asian lands were in the hands of the commander Seleucus (Seleukos of Seleucia), founder of the Seleucid Dynasty and its capital at Antioch; and Egypt fell to Ptolemy (Claudius Ptolemaeus) and his family, with its capital at Alexandria. Just as political authority was distributed between those

three capitals, so was Greek thought also distributed between them – in terms of knowledge and philosophy. However, the share of Alexandria was the largest and the richest.

Alexander had established the city of Alexandria in the early third century BCE, or, perhaps, it was not built until after his death – during the rule of Ptolemy I, who established its famous museum that constituted an institute for arts and sciences and which included a great library of more than 200,000 manuscripts, of which 50,000 were rare manuscripts; and the number of books during the third and fourth centuries CE reached approximately 700,000 volumes. The scholars who used to inhabit the museum-institute were known as ‘internal denizens’ (*dākhilīn*), and the government used to pay their expenses in order that they might occupy themselves exclusively with study and research. The early masters of the institute were Aristotle’s disciples, and they were directed towards scientific study, leaving philosophy aside. Thus, mathematics and natural sciences flourished initially, and then subsequently medical studies and chemistry, whereas later scholars focused on studies in the field of humanities such as literature, syntax, history and law. Their analysis of the Greek language was perfected, and syntax was invented in the sense of wordings. Beginning with the second century BCE and throughout the first and second centuries of the Common Era, many schools were established in Alexandria, run by masters teaching Platonic philosophy; among them was Ammonius Saccas, professor of Plotinus (during the third century CE). Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (also known as Yedidia or Philo the Jew) had, during the early stages of the first century CE, offered some explanations of the Torah, adopting symbolic interpretation and reconciling the stories and teachings and Greek philosophies.

Our concern here is not the wide scientific and philosophical activity occurring in Alexandria, in different centuries from the third century BCE to the transfer of its books and professors to Antioch during the rule of ‘Umar bin ‘Abd al-‘Azīz in the eighth century CE, but rather our main concern is that trend which came into prominence there during the second and third centuries CE, and which had some kind of predominance over other trends: namely, the Hermetism which we identified in the previous chapter with its religious and philosophical context as presented by the Arabic sources. So, we will attempt to emphasise now the primary components in Hermetism, in terms of philosophy and knowledge, in the light of the contemporary researches, just as we have done with Neo-Platonism in its Oriental strain.

What is Hermetism, what is its reality and what kind of philosophy

and knowledge was it disseminating? What type of cognitive-epistemological system did it establish?

Hermetism is attributed to Hermes 'Trismegistus' ('thrice-wise') as is common in Arabic literature or the 'tripartite in prophecy [*al-nubuwwah*], wisdom [*al-ḥikmah*] and dominion [*al-mulk*]' as he appears in the book by al-Mubashir bin Fātik,²⁵ or 'the thrice-great' as he appears in foreign sources in a translation of the word 'Trismegistus' appended to his name and distinguishing him from other Hermetics as Hermes Trismegistus.

Hermes is the name of an eminent Greek deity, and the Greeks correlated him to an ancient Egyptian deity, Thoth, just as some Jews made correlations between Hermes, Thoth and the prophet Moses. In ancient Egyptian mythology, Thoth was the name of the divine scribe of the god of the underworld, Osiris, the deity of Lower Egypt and the city of Abydos, responsible for the dead and human destiny. As one of Thoth's functions was to act as 'scribe', the invention of writing was attributed to him, and therefore, all arts and sciences adopted writing and were practised in a temple such as magic, medicine, astrology and divination. Subsequently, the deity Thoth was elevated a degree in the divine pantheon within Egyptian mythology, and the creation of the world through his voice was attributed to him, since he was associated with the influential power of the voice and the word. And the Egyptian mythology tells that his voice was self-substantiating, becoming matter itself. From this standpoint, the power of Thoth was in his *voice*, namely in the 'breath' emanating from him, and from this breath everything is created. Consequently, he is God the Creator and the Teacher. This was according to ancient Egyptian mythology, whereas, in Greek mythology, Hermes was honoured as the son of the great god Zeus, and the Greeks attributed to him the invention of writing, music, astrology, and weights and measures. As for Arabic Hermetic literature, Hermes was presented as the prophet Idrīs (Enoch), mentioned in the Qur'ān, and he was the first to teach writing, crafts, medicine, astrology, magic, and so on.

On the other hand, Hermetism as a religious knowledge and philosophy (theology) goes back to a series of books and treatises attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, elocutor in the name of God and, sometimes, presented as a god himself and therefore these writings were considered divine revelations. However, the contemporary academic research – especially Festugière's study – has proven beyond any doubt that these writings go back *in toto* to the second and third centuries CE; that they were written in Alexandria by Greek persons acquainted with the Greek language, or by Coptic religious, from Neo-Pythagoreanism and Neo-Platonism, and –

in terms of science (especially astrology) – from what was transferred to Egypt through Chaldean sciences when it was under Persian rule. As for Hermetic alchemy, it is a combination of Greek theoretical alchemy and the art of Egyptian goldsmithing. In addition, it was influenced by references to Zoroastrianism and Magian occult knowledge which were spread throughout Egypt. Thus, some authors estimate the quantity of references to Zoroastrian literature in Egypt in the year 200 BCE would be equivalent to about two million lines.²⁶ Festugière asserts that ‘Hermetic alchemy is no different from that of Ostans (Zoroastrian) alchemy, at least this seems so from the citations. The cultivation of Hermetic astrology is no different from that attributed to other personalities (Salomon, Alexander, Ptolemy, etc.): it is founded on the same beliefs in unseen power (the power of attraction/sympathy and repulsion/antipathy); it belongs to the same belief in the power of the stars or planet-gods and employs the same practical methods. The spells of Hermetic magic resemble, as a whole, those attributed to Apollonius (or Phoebus for Jābir Ibn Ḥayyān). In brief, in this scope, Hermes seems to be a mere pseudonym among those used during the Hellenistic Era to satisfy people’s need for revelation which preoccupied a great many minds.’²⁷ Thus, the secret behind this abundance of Hermetic texts is now clear, as well as their diversity and extensive dissemination inside and outside Egypt (some have estimated that during the third century CE there may have been approximately 25,000 texts).

Now, what is the content of the Hermetic teachings, particularly their religious-philosophical content?

Hermetism presents us with a simple theory of the universe:

At the apex of the entire universe and above the fixed stars there resides a supreme God, indescribable, transcendent, and deanthropomorphic and indiscernible by reason or eyesight, the sovereign of the world. Juxtaposed against him is an indeterminate matter, which is the principle of chaos and evil and the realm of impurity and filth. As for the ethereal world and all it includes, as well as the human being, its formation was delegated to the Maker-God capable of being known and perceived, and this was as a result of his being charged with such by the supreme God. On the other hand, the world beneath the orbit of the moon is, in its entirety, under the influence of the seven planets and the epicycle of the Zodiac. Hence, people were divided into seven categories where every type is subordinate to the characteristics of one of the seven Zodiacs. The human being is composed of a physical body, impure, inhabited by evil and subject to death, and a soul [*nafs*] containing a noble part derived from absolute reason [*al-‘aql al-kullī*]. This noble soul – or better,

this noble part of the soul – persists in a perpetual struggle against desires and whims caused by the existence of the body. In order to put a limit on this conflict, Hermes the god, the intermediary between the supreme God and the human being, through the medium of the absolute reason announces salvation and makes clear the path to deliverance. However, only a minority of sapient and lucid men is able to bear the illumination of reason (i.e., the absolute) guiding towards the true path of knowledge [*al-maʿrifah*], the path of the integration of the soul with God (that is, *al-fanāʾ* – self-extinction – according to the terminology used by Sufis). And those truly wise sages, pure, pious and avoiding all deficiency, are alone the ones who can be liberated from material and escape the grip of destiny (i.e., necessity): thus their redeemed souls ascend to heaven while their physical bodies integrate, after death, with one of the bodies of the planets. And the soul is elevated through its route of ascent to the eighth heaven (the highest heaven) filled with legions of angels guarding the highest empyrean. This is the fate of wise men; as for the impure souls, torrential winds fling them into the abyss of hell,

and the soul witnesses in its journey a number of spiritual beings: the angel of life, the angel of matter, the angel of joy, the angel of respite, the angel of fear and the transcendent God – free from desires – mentioned by Plato in the discourse between Avian, Timaeus [Timothy] and the Arian God [related to Arianism] as it will witness ‘limbo [*al-barzakh*], considered by Stoics and astrologists to separate the world of the heavens from that of the earth’.²⁸

It is clear from this synopsis, where we read, despite the focus on ideas that were widespread at a later stage within Arab-Islamic culture, and among the Sufis and esoteric trends in particular, that the main issues raised by the Hermetic religious philosophy revolve around the question of divinity and the creation of the world; the issue of the soul and its salvation, the issue of the unity of the universe and the reciprocal effect between its parts. We now aim to shed some light on those issues.

The Hermetic tracts on the divine are characterised by belief in two deities, one of them being subservient to the other. The supreme God is indescribable and indiscernible through reason or eyesight, and therefore only known by abstract negation: he is utterly removed from any resemblance to anything else in the world. He is not concerned with the matters of the universe, and nothing of these penetrate his knowledge because the universe and its components are enveloped in deficiencies, and this god is utterly removed from entering into any relation with what is deficient; consequently, it was impossible to arrive at knowledge of him through

contemplating the universe and its order, that is, via reason and the senses. So the universe does not serve to indicate him, nor does it guide towards him as no relation persists between it and him.

God the Creator and Maker is he who created the world, and who is, therefore, manifest in it, and it is possible to apprehend and know him through contemplating the universe and its order, and for that reason, it is said that he is everywhere, wherever a person directs his sight, he will find him, as everything bears witness to his existence. In this sense, a Hermetic text contained the following: 'If you wish to see God, then look at the sun, at the motion of the moon, at the harmony of the stars and ask yourself: who preserves the order in all this?' Another text addresses a novice saying: 'Do you assert that God is not discernible through the eyesight? Do not say such a thing; as who could be more manifest than God? He did not create everything except in order to show you himself in all of his creations.'²⁹

According to Festugière, from whom we quote here in summary, the belief in two Gods as we have seen reflects two religious trends that were predominant after the first century CE, and Hermetic literature was divided into two. There was an optimistic stream perceiving the world as beautiful and as an ordered system and perceiving God as a Creator-Maker of everything. Those who asserted such focused their attention on the world as a whole, and therefore chaos is subsumed under this order; and it seemed to them that evil must be one of the prerequisites for the existence of good. In contradistinction to this trend, there was another pessimistic stream that perceived the world as evil and chaotic. Among the most prominent manifestations of chaos in the eyes of the proponents of this view is the existence of a soul (*nafs*), which is a simple and immortal essence inside a material and mortal body. Thence, they were preoccupied with this dual nature of the human being: namely, as a self fragmented into two parts of different natures, the soul and the body. And they saw this fragmentation in everything composed of a body and soul, including the world itself. From this arose the conflict and contradiction in everything in the world. Therefore, they asserted that God – the God, the Truth who is good and beauty entirely – could not be the one who created the world by direct means, as it was untenable to assert that chaos emanated from him or that he could be the source of evil; and if it were the case that he was utterly removed from all that, then it also necessarily followed that he must supremely transcend the entire universe. From this standpoint they posited mediators between this supreme God and between the world, and at the head and above all these mediators was the Creator-Maker god.³⁰

In addition to these two conceptions of divinity in circulation among the 'elite' – the *intellectuals* in contemporary parlance – there was also a third perception widespread among the masses based on 'anthropomorphism' and 'metaphorical resemblance'. Festugière says: 'Except some narrow circles, believers at that time used not to conceive of God as being separated from people by an infinite distance like the one separating complete purity from impurity, or between complete holiness and the commission of sins, or between absolute spirituality and immersion in material nature. The masses used to conceive of their gods in the form of extremely powerful beings extending aid, healing and salvation to the human being. They were beings in the form of humans possessed of vast, immeasurable bodies. Given this, it was not strange that the human being might hope to delight in beholding the god. No doubt, all this required a preparation and the compliance with the necessary conditions of purity . . . and seeing God was considered as recompense obtained by a human being as a reward for following a certain mode of conduct in life', and from this originated the belief in the vision of God which was widespread in Hermetic literature, either during wakefulness or during sleep, either in the form of a human being or in the form of another being.³¹

This is a brief synopsis of the issue of divinity in Hermetic literature. As for the issue of the soul (psyche), its origin, nature and fate, this is a matter particular to the pessimistic trend which adopted the theory of the supreme God. The proponents of this orientation therefore posited an infinite separation between God and the world, and consequently affirmed that God is imperceptible both by reason and by sight. In another regard, they affirmed that the path to knowledge of God is the soul (*nafs*) for it is a part of the divine. It is capable of knowing him and attaining to true knowledge when it is capable of communicating with him and returning to him. As for the reason, it can, in their view, only derive its perceptions through physical bodies and what is subject to them, and bodies can never lead in any way to the knowledge of God.

This path, the path of recognising God through the soul and *not* reason, is asserted by all Gnostics. However, what distinguishes Hermetic gnosticism is the affirmation of the divine heavenly origin of the soul (*nafs*). The Hermetic texts explain this in two ways: either through the assertion that the soul is of a divine origin as being the 'daughter of God' according to the verbatim wording of some texts, or by the assertion that it is an expression of a combination of elements with 'something from God himself'. Other Hermetic texts affirm that God had only created that part of the human being which was of a divine nature – namely the soul, which bears

within it the image of God in the human; thus, this is the sense conveyed by these texts in regard to the well-known idiom of that time: ‘God created man in his image’ where the possessive pronoun ‘his’ was understood to refer to God.³²

Human souls are divine entities; they used to live originally in the divine realm, and then they committed a sin, the punishment for which was their fall into their bodies – their prisons. So, how could the soul be redeemed and saved from being lost in material substance and the consequences of a worse fate, the abyss of hell?

There was only one thing that could save the human soul, according to the Hermetic literature, and that was ‘knowledge’ (*al-ma‘rifah*), but *which* ‘knowledge’? It is the one towards which Hermes guides, who came to proclaim salvation, as previously indicated. This knowledge does not mean ‘scientific knowledge’ (*al-‘ilm*) – that is, *acquiring* knowledge – but rather the exertion of a continuous effort with the intent of purification and being rid of material substance and reintegration into the divine realm, or even self-annihilation (*al-fanā’*) in God. It is Hermetic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*), the features of which we can clearly discern in Islamic Sufism.

Festugière says: ‘My long acquaintance with the Hermetic texts led me to distinguish between two categories of mystic/Sufi knowledge which might, for the sake of brevity, be termed “mysticism by extroversion” (*al-taṣawwuf bi-l-intishār*) and “mysticism by introversion” (*al-taṣawwuf bi-l-inkifā’*). And, while the aim remains to communicate with the supreme God in both of these types of mysticism, the path toward this communion differs in each, but without a contradiction of one or the other: as for the mysticism of the first type, the human being exits from his essence to unite with God which he conceives, in this state, as the totality of existence in time and space, so the human being here dissolves in God (or what is tantamount to self-annihilation [*al-fanā’*] in the Arab-Islamic terminology); as for the second type, God himself invades the human soul and resides in it, thus transforming the human being into a new entity, a being that has been resurrected anew³³ (where this corresponds to [divine] incarnation or substitution [*al-ḥulūl*] -according to Arab-Islamic mysticism).

A Hermetic text explains the first path, saying:

everything that exists, including the world as a whole and absolute existence, includes within itself God in the form of ideas and meanings. Thus, if you do not put yourself on a level equal to God then you will not be able to know him because the analogous is only recognised through its analogue: you

must render yourself vast and mighty to a degree that is beyond measure, and you must avail yourself of a power that transcends all physical boundaries, and you must elevate yourself above all time, and you must be eternal [Æon]. Then, you will know God. Say to yourself: “Nothing is impossible for me”. Consider yourself immortal and able to know everything – every art and science and the nature of every living being. Raise yourself above all the greatest heights and plunge into the deepest depths; gather together in your self the sensations of all creatures: the sensations of fire, water, the dry, the damp, and imagine yourself existing simultaneously in every place, over the ground, in the sea, and in the sky. Imagine yourself yet unborn, picture yourself still in the womb of your mother, imagine yourself young, old, dead, and alive after death. If your mind can encompass all these things all at once, in terms of time, space, essences, means and quantities, then you will be able to know God. But if you leave your soul imprisoned in your body, and if you disparage of its capability and say: I have no thought, I have no power, I fear the sea, I am not able to ascend to the sky, I have no idea what I was or what I will become, then what is your need for God? That is because you cannot comprehend a single one of the beautiful and good things as long as you cherish your body, as long as you are not filled with virtue. In reality, the ignorance of God is the greatest depravity. To the contrary, the human being is capable of knowing, he has a desire to know and hopes to know: this is the straight path which leads you to the ultimate good [i.e., God]. It is through your conduct on this path, that he Himself [i.e., God] will come to you, communicate with you and appear before your eyes – even in times and places when you would not be expecting Him: whether you are awake or asleep, travelling by sea or on land, at day or night, whether you are speaking or silent, because nothing exists which is not him *Himself*.³⁴

This is ‘mysticism by extroversion’ and it reminds us of the method of Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*) which believes in the ‘union’ (*al-ittiḥād*) or ‘self-annihilation’ (*al-fanāʾ*) or ‘the unity of the witnessed’ (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*). As for the second type of Hermetic mysticism termed by Festugière the ‘mysticism by introversion’, it reminds us of al-Ḥallāj’s mysticism and others who assert ‘[divine] incarnation’. And this type stems from the idea of the consciousness of the reality of the soul: the soul (*nafs*) as part of God (i.e., according to the Arab Hermetic terminology, the word ‘flame [or ember]’, *qabas*, in the sense that the soul is a flame drawn from the essence of God) and if the human being is not completely conscious of this divine origin of the soul and does not behave on the basis that God exists in him (i.e., dwells in him), in some way, then the devil will possess

him and reside in him and replace God within him. A Hermetic text says: ‘when obliviousness obtains, obliviousness of God, for a certain soul, then of a necessity Satan occupies it. And as you have already learned: the human soul is, in fact, a kind of house, if it is not inhabited by God it will be inhabited by Satan.’ Also: ‘Philosophy teaches us that God is undoubtedly omnipresent. Despite that, the proper sanctum [*mihṛāb*] for Him, and whereby he has distinguished people, is the reason of the wise person . . . and as I have previously told you: let your mind be the *sanctum sanctorum* of God.’³⁵

This is the principle underlying the path of ‘mysticism by introversion’ or the Hermetic theory of ‘[divine] incarnation’. As for the method for realizing this ‘incarnation’, it is to make the soul a house for God and not Satan, and there are two methods: an indirect method requiring time and based on withdrawal from people and living in complete seclusion; and a direct method which is ‘conjoining’ (*al-jamʿ*): (the same term: ‘*al-jamʿ*’ can be found in currency with Sufis in Islam), and its intended goal is the realisation of unification within the self and subsequently realisation of its unification with God. This is achieved through desisting from speech and all bodily activity and ignoring every sensation until the human being can attain a ‘*rebirth*’ through which the marriage of the soul and God is concluded (that is, the *unification* with Him, and in the writings of some Islamic esotericism and mysticism, the word ‘matrimony’ [*nikāḥ*] is used and al-Ghazālī uses the word mating [*al-zawāj*], as we shall see). This ‘*rebirth*’ makes the human another entity entirely, radically different from his previous status, because ‘this new human being cannot be encompassed by the eyesight, as he has no colour, and cannot be perceived by touch as he has no component substance, and moreover, he cannot be fathomed. In reality, his external appearance might remain the same, yet this is a mere illusion which absolutely does not reflect his real existence, as his real existence does not possess any colour or form, and it does not have any physical material nature. Therefore, he is not perceived through the senses nor is he subject of any awareness other than Himself.’³⁶ When a human being attains to this station, when he retrieves ‘his real existence’, in this way he will have reached the stage of disclosure and illumination – *al-kashf wa al-isḥrāq*: the illumination of God in his soul.

We will stop at this point in regard to the Hermetic theory of the soul, its nature and the means for its salvation, and we will now move to the third and final issue among the essential matters in Hermetic religious philosophy: the issue of the unity of the universe (the unity of universal being [*wahdat al-kawn*]) and the interrelated reciprocal relation between

its parts, and all that is associated with such, including the 'occult' sciences such as magic, astrology and alchemy.

The ancient Greek perception of the universe is based on the belief that the terrestrial world is subject to the influence of the seven planets (spheres) and the epicycle of their Zodiacs and their forms according to the principle of the unity of the universe and the interdependence of its parts as well as their mutual influence. The universe, according to such a conception, consists of concentric orbits, one inside the other, the centre of which is the earth (i.e., described by Ikhwān al-Ṣafā [Brethren of Purity] as the skins of an onion). Thus, there is mutual influence between the earth and what is on it, and the astrological orbits on the one hand, and that between those orbits with each other, on the other hand. This theory was tantamount to religious creed during the Hellenistic era in general, and in the Hermetic literature in particular. In addition, this theory was the epistemological and philosophical foundation underpinning the Hermetic 'occult' sciences such as alchemy, astrology and magic, in addition to mysticism.

Hermetic mysticism of both types – the extrovert (i.e., unification, self-annihilation) and the introvert (i.e., incarnation) – is, in fact, one of the manifestations of this concept of oneness of the universe and one of its results. From belief in the divine origin of the soul and its descent into the physical body as a punishment to believing in the possibility of its return to its origin in the aim of an integration with God comes the implied belief in the existence of a spiritual power circulating in the world just as the soul (psyche) circulates in the body. And if this perception had come to pervade the ancient world including Greek thought at the time of its utmost rationalism, then, there is a vast difference between employing this idea at the scientific and philosophical level with Greek rationalism, and between the irrational and mystical employment of the same idea. Max Velmans, a senior specialist in the subject, says:

During the Hellenistic era in Egypt, a completely new way of perceiving nature had appeared; a mystical-magical method consecrated, to a certain extent, by the ancient animistic worship of animals and plants. Thus, while Leucippus (i.e., the School of Aristotle) had made of zoology, botany and the systematic approach to metallurgy the fulcrum of his researches in the natural sciences, and while some great results had been achieved in all branches of these sciences – despite numerous mistakes in observation and hasty deductions – the endeavours which were then undertaken (i.e., at the School of Alexandria during the Hellenistic era) in all fields of organic and inorganic nature, were directed towards uncovering of the supernatural magical powers of natural beings;

that is, the uncovering of their spiritual attributes, peculiarities and their magical effects, as well as the relations of sympathy and antipathy corresponding to their nature and prevailing in all three realms (human, animal and vegetative). The human being, animals, plants and stones (including minerals), are no longer perceived except as bearing mystic powers, assumed to cure all ills and pains, and to facilitate human prosperity, felicity and glory and the utilisation of supernatural powers. According to this scope of perceiving things, there was no break between natural sciences and medicine, but rather they both constituted a whole. The proponents of this literature (i.e., the Hermetic) have derived their subject matter, with a bewildering naivety, not merely from Greek knowledge (Leucippus, Democritus, Apollodorus) but also from the pseudoepigraphical writings of Zoroaster, Ostans of the ancient Persians, Dardanus from among the Jews, the Phoenician Makhos and the Egyptian magician Apollonius, and among their strange teachings pertaining to sympathy and antipathy was that which conferred on this literature a particular romantic cast. This literature focused on that kind of particular writings on “Physica” (“the books on intrinsic material attributes (*Kutub al-Khawāṣ*)” that is nature: see the letter by Jābir bin Ḥayyān [Geber]), under that title) and on the arcana of “Nature” and the wonders of magic. The locutor of this strange kind of literature, mostly Oriental in terms of its content, is the soothsayer-magician, in the sense that was imparted to this word during the Hellenistic era – namely the one who is capable of perceiving all events and the secret relations in nature. And we know among the great authors of this literature Demetrius Phalereus (circa 200 BCE) and Pseudo-Menedemus (the first and second century BC) . . . then a person called Apollodorus Apollonius [of Tyana], also called Apollodorus the Epicurean by the Arabs.³⁷

The unity of the universe, the interdependent connection of its parts, the mutual reciprocal effect between them through sympathy and antipathy, are the fundamentals underlying the Hermetic perception of the universe, which simultaneously underpin the Hermetic ‘occult’ sciences such as alchemy, astrology and magic. As Festugière asserts, nothing could reflect this perception and principles governing such a famous and extremely widespread analogy in the Hermetic literature: ‘the resemblance of the world to the human being and the human being as a microcosm of the world’.³⁸ This principle, as it emphasises the interconnection of parts of the world along the lines of the interdependence of the parts of the human body, affirms the circulation of a single power in it, as a whole and in parts, just as life circulates throughout all parts of the human body, making

the mutual and reciprocal effect between the parts of the universe one of its fundamental laws, or even the *ultimate* law.

On the basis of this conception are based the Hermetic occult sciences with ‘alchemy’ at the forefront; thus, by knowing the means of sympathy and antipathy in metallurgy, it is possible to transform base metals (of low value) into gold through craftsmanship and concoction. The epistemological principle which governs this kind of alchemy is that expression attributed to the father of Ostans, the Magian magician, which may summarise in ‘a few words the whole book’, namely, the whole science, that is pseudoscience of alchemy as a Hermetic text relates, this idiom is the following ‘there is no nature except that it is attracted to another nature and there is no nature except that it is submissive to another nature and there is no nature except that it predominates over another nature’. Thus, to obtain a valuable metal, it must be necessary to liberate it from base characteristics, the characteristics of base metals that envelop it and overpower it, and this could be achieved by employing another ‘nature’ even stronger, termed an ‘elixir’, which would perform this ‘purification’ and transformation. Whatever could be achieved at the level of the larger macrocosm of the world, and at the level of nature, could likewise also be achieved in the microcosm, the human being. The soul of a human being could ‘corrode’ as a result of its interconnection with the body, until it loses or almost loses its noble nature. However, it can be refined and restored to its divine origin, pure and clear. Here also, ‘craftsmanship’ and ‘concoction’ are necessary, or rather there must be an ‘elixir’ which is ‘purification’. It is here that the organic interdependence between alchemy and mysticism (*al-taṣawwuf*) persists in Hermetic literature. It is reflected in one of the peculiarities of this literature, one of the essential characteristics – the integration of science (and scientific knowledge) in religion and religion in science.

So, to conclude, with the coming into prominence of this general characteristic – to which Festugière accords particular importance in the conclusion of the first part of his book – we perceive another one of the positions occupied by Hermetism in Arab-Islamic culture: the point at which mysticism merges into alchemy and alchemy into mysticism and – in a general sense – science into religion and religion into science.

Festugière says that the most prominent of features in Hermetic thought is that there is no separation between science and religion, as there had been previously. ‘As is well known, the decisive separation between those two fields [i.e., the field of science and the field of religion] and the clear distinction between what ought to pertain to science and what ought to relate to the knowledge of God, and salvaging the rational order from the

impurities of mythology, were among the greatest accomplishments of pre-Socratic Greek philosophy.' Whereas here, in Hermetic thought, 'those two fields had been recombined anew. They had been intermixed and their fundamental principle and origin was the same. This was because it was no longer possible to aspire to acquire knowledge – *any* knowledge – except from a god, or through revelation through a prophet inspired to provide knowledge to people as revelation (that is, not by way of evidence or proof) this was the essential fact upon which everything else is based.'³⁹

Thus, in order to

know the secrets of conjuring [alchemy] the human being must find God first, and in order to find God he must revert to himself and silence his appetitive desires. We only delude ourselves when we seek outside of ourselves for what is in fact within us [God]. This deficiency has come to us from matter. So, let the soul be liberated from matter, and let it focus all its attention on the deepest depths of itself where God is found present. This is the very foundation of purification as defined by Hermes in the *Criterion*: it is receiving the baptism of the [absolute] reason [i.e., the ultimate] then engaging in gnosticism through this reason which is responsible for rectifying our understandings and for our cognisance and provide us with new aptitudes (and dispositions). Thus, through the knowledge of himself, the human being knows God, and through his knowledge of God, he comes to know also the rarified elements [i.e., which transform base metals into gold], as knowledge, *every* knowledge, is encapsulated in this single knowledge: whoever communes with God draws from the same wellspring from which springs every reality.⁴⁰

The integration of science into religion and religion into science is one of the principal hallmarks whereby the 'resigned mind' discloses itself and its identity. It demands that 'reasoning proceeds from God' even in matters that God had left for the human being in which to reason directly from nature and to exploit his interests or draw from it indications or guidance affirming the existence of God himself. This is not to mention those things about which Muḥammad, the Prophet of Islam, said: 'You know [best] about the affairs of your world.' So, we will track the traces and positions of this 'resigned mind' in Arab-Islamic culture where its danger had spread despite the previously mentioned prophetic *ḥadīth* and, moreover, despite all the gravitas of the 'religious rational' of the Arab *bayān*.

Notes

1. T. J. De Boer, *History of Philosophy in Islam*, trans. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥādī Abū Rīdah (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta’līf wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1957), p. 21.

2. The term *al-lāma‘qūl al-‘aqlī*, the logically or conceptually *unreasonable* or *absurd*, is best understood in contradistinction to the *al-ma‘qūl al-dīnī*, the *religious* reasonable or rational. That is, given the fact that the sphere of the ‘religious reasonable’ admits the possibility of miracles, there are phenomena and conceptual possibilities in it which, are typically rejected by the normative empirical logic or that, based on everyday experience, where the ‘metaphysical’ might be rejected as ‘conceptually unreasonable’ or ‘logically absurd’. For the purpose of this translation, the term *al-lāma‘qūl al-‘aqlī* will be rendered as the irrational/unreasonable ‘of the reason’. [Editor.]

3. Regarding the influence of the school of Ḥarrān in Islam, see my *Nahnu wa al-Turāth* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah), pp. 167 ff in 1st edn and pp. 177 ff in 2nd edn.

4. See Meyerhoff, Max, ‘From Alexandria to Baghdad,’ in Badawī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *al-Turāth al-Yūnānī fī al-Ḥaḍārah al-Islāmiyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabīyah, 1965), p. 71.

5. Al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa-al-Niḥal*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Muḥammad al-Mutawwakil (Cairo: Mu’asasat al-Ḥalabī, 1968), vol. 2, p. 117.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 3.

7. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fibrīst* (Flugel edition), p. 255.

8. Badawī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Aflūṭīn ‘inda al-‘Arab*, introduction.

9. Al-Qifṭī, *Akhhbār al-‘Ulamā’ bi-Akhhbār al-Ḥukamā’*, mukhtaṣar al-Zawzanī (Leipzig, 1903), p. 285.

10. It is connected to Festugière’s study of hermeticism and Peuch’s study of Gnosticism.

11. We have already explained the differences between the Oriental and Western approaches of Neo-Platonism via my study of Avicenna and his Oriental philosophy (note 2). I relied on Avicenna’s own texts for this purpose. What we are addressing here emphasises what we determined in that study.

12. R. P. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris: Gabalda, 1944–1949), four volumes.

13. Festugière dedicated four volumes for studying Hermeticism. The first volume was issued in 1944 and he devoted it for studying astrology and esoteric sciences, after providing a four-chapter introduction in which the conceptual *milieu* of Hermeticism was addressed, and its origins and realities were explained. Volume 2, published in 1949, addressed the hermetic theory about Nous, the Creator. Volume 3 was released in 1952, and studied the Hermetic opinions about the nature of soul, its origin and destiny. Volume 4, published in 1953, explains the theory of transcendental god and Gnosticism.

14. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès*, vol. 1, p. 8.

15. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 5.

16. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 65.

17. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 13–19.

18. Henri-Charles Peuch, *Enquête de la Gnose* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), pp. 23–33.

19. Aḥmad, Bayḍūn, ‘Mamlakat al-shar wa al-malik al-tanbal: qirā’ah fī al-‘ilmānīyah’, *Majallat al-Fikr al-‘Arabī* (Ma‘had al-Inmā’ al-‘Arabī), 15th ed., June 1980, p. 120, n. 11.

20. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès*, vol. 1 p. 19.

21. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès*, vol. 3, p. 19.

22. Peuch, *Enquête de la Gnose*, pp. 28–33.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.
24. In the introduction given by al-Shahristānī about the philosophy of the ‘Seven Sages’ (see the previous chapter).
25. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès*, vol. 4, pp. 36–37.
26. Ibn Fātik, Abī al-Wafā’ al-Mubashir, *Mukhtār al-Ḥikam fī Maḥāsīn al-Kalim*, ed. by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Beirut: al-Mu’asasah al-‘Arabīyah li-l-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1980), p. 11. In this way, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah and al-Qiftī distinguish between three Hermeticists: Hermes of Babylonia, Hermes of Upper Egypt, Hermes of Lower Egypt.
27. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès*, vol. 1, p. 43.
28. Rivaud, Albert, *Histoire de la Philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1960), vol. 1, p. 518.
29. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès*, vol. 2, p. 57.
30. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. xi, x.
31. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 52.
32. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 34.
33. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. ix–x
34. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 142–143.
35. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 214.
36. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 219–225.
37. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 196–197.
38. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 92.
39. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 356.
40. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 361.

CHAPTER 9

Resigned Reason

2: Within Arab-Islamic Culture

Hermetic Philosophy and Arab-Islamic Thought

Perhaps the reader familiar with the key aspects of Arab-Islamic thought will have noticed that in the previous chapter concerning Hermetism and the Oriental version of Neo-Platonism we touched upon the origins and categories of many features that were transmitted and which merged into Arab-Islamic culture from the ancient heritage, forming what we previously termed the ‘irrational of the reason’ in this culture, and what we will now call the ‘resigned reason’, that is, its manifestations and position within the same culture – Arab-Islamic culture. To merely touch upon such matters is insufficient, however; the observations we cited in the previous chapter concerning similarities between Arab-Islamic thought to any aspect of Hermetism or Neo-Platonism were limited observations and isolated from any general context.

Firm evidence and documentation are therefore required. This will be our aim, in this chapter, to the extent afforded by the limits permitted by a chapter in a book. However, before that, we consider it necessary, in order to remove all ambiguities and to avoid misunderstandings, to clarify three issues.

The first issue is related to the nature of the ancient heritage itself. The interference of certain streams of thought during the Hellenistic era is an essential fact, for it is not possible to distinguish decisively and clearly as to which of them belonged to Neo-Platonism, in its Oriental strain in

particular, and which of them belonged to Hermetism and Neo-Pythagoreanism, or to Neo-Stoicism or Manicheism, and neither is it possible to distinguish between all of these and Gnosticism in its various expressions. The outcome of this interference is that a particular idea might potentially belong originally to a certain stream, but could have been transmitted into Arab-Islamic culture through another stream. Thus, Jewish Gnosticism, for instance, could have potentially been transferred to Arab-Islamic culture, not through *isrāʾīlīyāt* (texts and concepts of Judaism introduced into Islam), but through Neo-Platonism. And the same thing could be said concerning Manicheism, as some of its components might have been introduced into the Arab culture through the ‘window’ after it had exited completely ‘through the door’, infiltrating through Hermetism or in its name – especially given that Manicheism used to consider Hermes as one of the prophets and the texts relating to such circulated widely throughout Egypt.

As for the second issue we intend to elucidate here, to deconstruct it into component parts and ‘relate’ each part to its ‘origin’. We are not proceeding according to such an atomistic methodology, Orientalist philology, not only because it is subject to academic criticism, but also because it does not respond to our concerns, as contemporary Arabs, nor to the kind of awareness we desire to have with respect to our heritage.¹ Therefore, we wish simply to determine the type of order of knowledge (epistemological system) underlying the ancient legacy that was transmitted to Arab-Islamic culture, in order to be able, at a later stage, to discuss the extent of the presence of this inherited epistemological order of knowledge order of knowledge within Arab-Islamic culture and the extent of its coexistence or conflict with other orders of knowledge known by this culture. We should not fail to observe that Arab-Islamic culture might have very well utilised this heritage, or at least some aspects of it, in a new way, and accorded it another ‘Islamic’ significance. Indeed, we have earlier revealed, in a previous study, how Islamic philosophy was a ‘reading’ or a reinterpretation or utilisation of another philosophy.² And, if we do not accord much attention here to the type of ideological utility of any aspect of the ancient heritage within Arab culture, it is because the subject of our discourse is the epistemological dimension alone. Here, we would remind readers of the distinction we made in our aforementioned study between conceptual knowledge content and the ideological content.³ Our focus in the studies we undertook earlier was directed away from some essential aspects of our philosophical heritage and was focused, rather, on the ideological content of such, so we emphasised the ‘Islamic’ and ‘Arab’ character of

philosophy in Islam.⁴ Our research here is into the basic premises of knowledge within Arab-Islamic culture as a whole, namely the orders of knowledge in it. It is true that we shall have to demonstrate whether the order of knowledge, underpinning this or that aspect of the ancient heritage, had remained the same after its transmission into Arab-Islamic culture or whether it had been subjected to modifications; we will be obliged to demonstrate this, but at a later stage (in the second part of this chapter) where we will explore analytically the orders of knowledge and their theses within Arab culture. For the moment, since we are in the midst of research into the formation of Arab reason – namely the components of the culture to which it belongs – we will be restricted to only delimiting the primary positions occupied by ‘resigned reason’ in this culture – which it had inherited from the Hellenistic era. Since we have already indicated in the previous chapter the ‘conformity’ with Neo-Platonism in its Oriental strain with the structure of that eclectic haphazard ‘accumulation’ of the pseudoepigraphical philosophy of the ‘Seven Sages’ presented by al-Shahristānī, our focus here will be on following the forms of the Hermetic presence in Arab-Islamic culture, considering that ‘accumulation’ to be both an interpolation and a part of it.

As for the third and final issue we intend to raise here, it is the matter of this ‘presence’ itself: the presence of the ancient heritage within Arab-Islamic thought, and this is an issue organically related to the ‘historiography’ of the evolution of this thought itself. Moreover, it affects one of the concerns of contemporary Arab thought, the concern that is expressed as the necessity of rewriting Arab history, and the history of Arab culture is a part of it, even the most invaluable aspect of it. Therefore, this issue deserves our attention.

Considering the Era of Codification as the point of departure in the study of the components of Arab reason and its connection to the source origins of Arab-Islamic culture and its categories, instead of starting ‘the journey’ from an indeterminate point within the so-called (pre-Islamic) ‘Era of the Jāhiliyah’ is really a methodological and procedural choice: as it may enable us, from the first moment, to extend our vision to a larger and broader space; it affords us the possibility of excavation in several spheres without giving advance priority and authority of any one over the other. Thus, when we began moving within the locus of the Arab *bayān*, to study its methodological components and determinants of reasonableness, we were not bound by this traditional ‘historical’ perception that makes the researcher – consciously or unconsciously – direct his inquiry in a manner which renders the ‘posterior’ a definite result of the ‘anterior’

in terms of discourse, even if there were not, in fact, such a unilateral causal connection. We have been spared this tendency that prevailed in Europe during the nineteenth century⁵ which endured through the absence of critical examination of the issue of ‘the beginning’ when engaging in writing history. Thus, instead of occupying ourselves in the ‘governing principles’ of the connection between the links in the chain of a unified ‘series’ propagating in an ascending order, real or contrived, we turned towards research within a single link of the chain, until when we came to an end in demarcating its limits and examining what concerned us, we began to sense the necessity of identifying the adjacent link in the chain, in length and breadth, because this contiguous relation had come to impose itself on us as a relation of mutual definition.

Not only this, but embarking from the Era of Codification in the study of the components of Arab reason will impel us – while we are in the context of research into the presence of the forms of the presence of the ancient heritage within Arab-Islamic culture and liberated from the traditional ‘historical’ perception – to distinguish between two levels of this presence: the level of ‘the scholastic’ (*al-ʿālim*), which is reproduced by means of the *ʿulamāʾ* and which is dependent on systematised written discourse; and the level of ‘the popular’ (*al-ʿāmm*), which is reproduced by non-scientific means, means of the ‘ordinary [person]’ and depending basically on the telling of stories and oral transmission.

This distinction was imposed by the Era of Codification itself, because during this epoch dealing with the ancient heritage had begun and was undertaken at the level of ‘the scholastic’, along with the persisting or even increasing interaction with it at the ‘popular’ level, in view of the expansion of the cultural sphere and the amplification of its role in conjunction with the expansion of the borders of the Arab-Islamic state. It is obvious that dealing with the ancient legacy or even the Islamic heritage itself used to be undertaken before the Era of Codification at the ‘popular’ level only as there was no ‘codification’ to rival the codified Book – the Qurʾān, ‘the perspicuous Arabic book’. Ibn Khaldūn had already perceived, thanks to his critical acumen, the necessity of this distinction we are discussing here: the distinction between the level of ‘the scholastic’ and that of ‘the popular’ in the ancient heritage within Arab-Islamic cultural space. And that transpired when he assessed the methodology of the early *mufasssirūn* (exegetes) of the Qurʾān who had adopted ‘transmitted traditions’ (*al-naql*) as well as ‘reported accounts’ (*al-riwāyah*) and who had recourse, in their *tafsīr* (exegesis), to the legacy of Jewish thought which was prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula at that time. Ibn Khaldūn noticed that the writings of

those *mufassirūn* ‘included the contemptible as well as the laudable, the acceptable as well as the rejected’, and the reason for that – as he asserts – is that ‘the Arabs were not among the people of the Book [*ahl al-kitāb*, i.e., Christians and Jews] or a people of knowledge [*ahl al-‘ilm*], rather, they were nomads [Bedouins] and illiterate, and if they aspired to know anything of what the human psyche aspires to know such as the reasons for things and the origin of creations and secrets of existence, they would resort to the people of the Book who had enquired into these before them and they would benefit from them: these are the people of the Torah, the Jews and those who followed their religion among the Christians. And the people of the Torah who were among the Arabs, at that time, were Bedouins just like them, and they did not know anything more than that which was known by the common people among the people of the Book.’⁶ Hence, the early *mufassirūn* dealt with the Jewish heritage at the same ‘popular’ level that was prevalent among Jews in the Arabian Peninsula at that time, whereas dealing with the same heritage at the ‘scholastic’ level would occur at a later stage when ‘people had recourse to verification [*al-tahqīq*] and testing [*al-tamhīṣ*],’ according to the terms employed by Ibn Khaldūn himself.⁷

Undoubtedly, what was noticed by Ibn Khaldūn in the context of the *isrā’īlīyāt* (i.e., the assumptions and texts of Judaica – popular or other – which were interpolated into the Islamic tradition and its literature) is also applicable to other categories of the ancient heritage: there were, before Islam, more than fifty schools dealing ‘scholastically’ with such cultural products – scientific, religious and philosophical – which would be termed during the Era of Codification ‘the knowledge of ancients’ (*‘ulūm al-awā’il*). These schools extended from Egypt to Persia and from them ‘waves’ of knowledge were propagated far and wide. As it is well known, trade routes and commerce played an essential role in this wavelike spread of culture. We use the term wavelike propagation and we intend by it to indicate that the intensity of the wave decreases in direct proportion to its increasing distance from the centre until dissipating when it is replaced by another wave which is subject to the same forces as the first. Waves might accelerate or slow down in frequency, just as there might be a ripple effect with the interaction of different waves in a way which renders it difficult to differentiate between antecedent and subsequent. Furthermore, in all cases, a given wave loses its inner momentum and force of propagation and its inner order becomes disturbed in proportion to its distance from its centre (point of origin). Therefore, we must assert that the ‘cultural waves’ that emanated from the centres of culture and learning (Alexandria, Antioch, etc.) would reach the Arabian Peninsula and its urban centres

such as Mecca, Ṭāʾif and Yathrib (Medina) in extremely muted and fleeting form. Moreover, it was ‘popular’ culture that reached these far points rather than the ‘scholastic’ culture as observed by Ibn Khaldūn with respect to the *isrāʾīlīyāt*.

From this standpoint, we ought to perceive the deep and ‘real’ significance of the distinction assumed by several orientations in Islam, beginning from and originating at the time of the Era of Codification, and – more importantly – induced by its presumptions, between the ‘manifest’ (*al-ẓāhir*) and the ‘hidden’ (*al-bāṭin*) within Qurʾānic discourse. All those who adopted this distinction, and in particular the Shīʿites and the Sufis, and the movements of mysticism and illumination made connections between positing ‘the manifest’ and the comprehension of ‘common people’ (*al-ʿāmī*) on the one hand, and between the assertion of ‘the mystical/hidden content’ and comprehension of ‘the scholastic’ (*al-ʿālim*) on the other. Since ‘knowledge’ for them was drawn from the ancient heritage, they transformed ancient religious philosophies into the ‘real’ mystical (*al-bāṭin*) content of the text of the Qurʾānic *bayān*. Thus, there was ‘revelation’ (*al-tanzīl*) as opposed to ‘interpretation’ (*al-taʾwīl*) and in contradistinction to ‘Islamic *sharīʿah*’ was ‘reality’ (*al-ḥaqīqah*) as there were ‘[lesser] approximations (*mithālāt*) of truth’ in contradistinction to ‘the truth’ (*al-ḥaqq*). Al-Farābī expounded upon his philosophy of emanation (*fayḍ*) in this question when he said that opinions among a religious community (*millah*) are mere ‘[lesser] approximations’ of opinions in philosophy and that ‘the theoretical views among the religious community derive from the proofs/demonstrations of theoretical philosophy but are adopted in the religious community without demonstrations [*barāhīn*]’.⁸

We may rely on another illustration, in closer proximity to us, to elucidate what we intend to say and to delimit its scope, by saying that research into the origins of Arab-Islamic culture and its categories from within ‘Arab intellectual life in the [pre-Islamic] era of the Jāhilīyah’ is similar to research – at the present time in the twenty-first century – into the origins of classical Arabic language (*al-fuṣḥā*) and its grammar through contemporary colloquial ‘Arabic’ dialects. Similarly, just as we would never be able, as far as I believe, to discover the structure of classical Arabic and its grammar at the ‘scholastic’ level by conducting research into Egyptian, Syrian and Moroccan colloquial dialects, we could ever discover the origins of the Arab culture and its categories by beginning from a ‘certain’ point in the pre-Islamic era of the Jāhilīyah. Conversely, we can move with relative ease from classical Arabic to any of the ancient or modern Arabic colloquial dialects, that is to say that we are able to indicate that such are

‘dissipated distal forms’ of the primary wave carrying the classical Arabic language. Similar to this is the transition from ‘scholastic’ culture prevalent before Islam in the schools of Alexandria, Antioch, Harran, Gundeshapur and other centres, to the ‘popular’ cultures prevalent in the ‘countries of the Arabs’ before the Era of Codification.

Our insistence on the choice of this methodology is justified, in our view. For it pertains in fact, to a ‘serious’ presentation of the matter of the rewriting of Arab cultural history. When we describe this presentation as *serious*, it is because we see that all the ‘new’ attempts at writing the history of Arab thought reiterate the same ‘ancient’ written history and follow the same ‘inherited’ path, thus falling, despite all the ideological caveats and justifications adopted, into what we have termed ‘the traditional or inherited way of comprehending cultural heritage [*al-turāth*]’.⁹ The course of action in all these ‘new’ attempts with all their different ideological points of departure follows one and the same path: the starting point is some unknown point within the pre-Islamic era of the Jāhilīyah and follows the ‘evolution’ of Arab thought along an uninterrupted ascending line where the ‘dawn of Islam’ and ‘the Era of Codification and Translation’ are recorded as merely two of the salient points along the line, as if it were an interconnected chain where the antecedent link explains the subsequent link and completes it. This is when ‘intellectual life’ during the era of the Jāhilīyah – in addition to the process of restructuring during the Era of Codification as we have indicated in a previous chapter¹⁰ – does not explain what occurred after the emergence of Islam and the spread of ‘the conquests’, in particular during the Era of Codification and afterwards. In other words, the internal evolution of Arab intellectual conceptual life during the era of the Jāhilīyah is at the farthest possible remove from being a possible means to explain and categorise this diversity and abundance of ideas, perceptions, views and doctrines that Arab society witnessed a century after the emergence of Islam – that is, two or three centuries after that indeterminate point in the era of the Jāhilīyah considered to be a beginning and point of departure. The ‘law of quantitative accumulation and qualitative transformation’ and other modern conceptions, scientifically valid in many fields, cannot establish a causal link between the ‘status’ of Arab thought before the Islamic conquests and the Era of Codification and its ‘status’ afterwards that would permit the assertion that there had been an internal evolution at the level of the thought and that this evolution had achieved a ‘quantum leap’. If a researcher tries to establish such an interdependence he is positing a flimsy and subsidiary continuity at the expense of another real and more general continuity, and

moreover is manufacturing one history at the expense of another: when he emphasises, or rather when he *manufactures*, the cultural history of the Arabs of the Jāhiliyah out of dissipated material of which he only possesses scattered fragments, many of which were 'restored' during the Era of Codification itself, he neglects or marginalises the rich and productive cultural history of the centres of culture and learning across Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Persia – namely the 'scholastic' level of history of the ancient heritage which alone explains 'what was antecedent' – namely that 'popular' level of culture known by Arabs before the conquests and the 'codification' – in addition to its being an essential and basic element in 'what was subsequent', namely, in Arab-Islamic culture as it was re-structured from the Era of Codification onwards.¹¹

We realise that the reader will ask: how could we drop from the cultural history and 'intellectual life' of the Jāhiliyah and Islamic eras and replace it with the history of philosophical and scientific schools which were 'non-Arab' and 'extrinsic' to the locus of Islam. Should we sacrifice our own 'national history' for the sake of an 'interposed' one?

Nothing could be farther from our conception and concern than these 'emotional' conclusions. What we intend to confirm here is that, just as the 'era of the Jāhiliyah' cannot explain politically or sociologically the Era of Codification, so it does not explain it culturally. The opposite might be possible, and this is what actually occurred. In addition to the fact that the Jāhiliyah era was structured during the Era of Codification, as we have previously clarified,¹² 'intellectual life' during the era of the Jāhiliyah finds its origins and categories in the 'ancient heritage' which was resurrected in its 'scholastic' form during the Era of Codification. It is erroneous to view this ancient heritage as an interpolation or as foreign or extrinsic; rather, it ought to be considered as a part of our national history. And why should not this be the case given that it was located for over ten centuries previous to the Era of Codification in Arab regions: Alexandria, Antioch, Apamea, Harran, Edessa and Nussaybin, then Baghdad, and before then in the lands of Babylon, Egypt and Yemen. More important than all of that is that this ancient heritage had entered into Arabic-Islamic culture as an integral part of it, which constitutes the most essential element of the Arab identity since it became fully conscious of itself during the Era of Codification.

In fact, the ancient heritage was considered to be an 'interpolated' knowledge during the Era of Codification itself, and this is true, but in the sense that it was an interpolation into the locus of the Arab rhetorical *bayān* and a constraining factor of it; and moreover it was presented as the

‘scholastic’ form of what this locus contained among technical, linguistic and rhetorical but ‘popular’. However, the concern for those who seek a new and scientific way of dealing with our traditional heritage, to rewrite its history, is not to engage in the conflicts of the past and to champion the ‘deeply rooted’ over the ‘interpolated’, or vice versa, or ‘the hidden’ over ‘the manifest’, but rather our task is to view with a critical spirit both sides together – namely all the components of our traditional heritage. This alone is the way which will enable us to really possess it and consequently to escape the archetypes we have already put aside, and in particular the Jāhilīyah Bedouin ‘Arab (*al-aʿrābī*)’ paradigm, the presence of which still continues to be strong in our conscience and our ‘mental’ perceptions, as we elucidated in the fourth chapter of this book.

Thus, if we call for the integration of the cultural history of the scientific and cultural centres which used to be located within the Arab world before Islam, instead of remaining captive to the era of the Jāhilīyah in romanticised Bedouin spirit; and, if we call for this, the purpose would not be merely to connect our national cultural history with the cultural history of the world, but also – and this is significant – for the purpose of identifying the components of Arab-Islamic culture, to examine and criticise them in order to arrive at a restructuring of the Arab essence according to new bases predicated on eliminating the traces of negative paradigms of the past through exposure of their origins and identifying their natures and the conditions that produced them – whether before Islam or after it, and whether their source was the Arab Jāhilīyah era or the centres of learning previously indicated.

In this context, and for this purpose, we devoted the previous chapter to ‘resigned reason’, within the ancient heritage and we dedicate the current chapter to emphasizing the primary positions occupied by this ‘resigned reason’ within Arab-Islamic culture, embarking from an empirical but dispassionately critical point of view primarily directed towards serving the case of rationalism in Arab thought. Therefore, we will return to the point at which we ended the previous chapter, and we will enquire into the forms of the Hermetic presence in Arab-Islamic culture and the status of ‘resigned reason’ within it.

* * *

Clearly, our task is not to survey or enumerate Hermetic texts within Arab-Islamic culture with all of their various religious, philosophical and

scientific inclinations. This task, worthy of the efforts of Arab researchers as a necessary step towards rewriting our cultural history on critical and scientific bases, has not been undertaken to date – as far as we know – other than an initial attempt by Massignon, published among the appendices of the first part of Festugière's aforementioned study.¹³ Massignon employed in his attempt the 'inventory' approach, and he listed all the titles of the books and letters belonging directly to the Hermetic literature. Consequently, it does not touch on content except to delimit three major 'criteria' considered by Massignon to constitute sufficient evidence that a given text, among the ancient Arabic texts, should be considered Hermetic. These three criteria are as follows:

1. The assertion of the existence of one god, inexpressible and indescribable as well as indiscernible through reason/by the mind (*al-ʿaql*), but reachable through asceticism and purification, and continuous supplication/prayer and celibacy.
2. Assertion of the interconnection between the lower world and the supernal world, and the impossibility of establishing any interstice between heaven and earth, and explaining this, theoretically, by the connection between the 'realms' of beings with each other (the realm of metals is connected with the realm of plants and this is connected with that of animals, while this is connected with the realm of human beings and the latter is connected – through the soul – with the realm of the angels (the supernal beings) and then employing all this practically in the 'experiments' of astrologists, alchemists and magicians, and so forth.
3. The assertion of an anomalous causal series (causes where 'anomalies' prevail over regular sequences and are subject to 'experimental' variation and not to rational necessity); and, for Massignon, this is 'what distinguishes between a tendency towards Hermetism and a tendency towards Aristotelian logic'¹⁴ and which brings it into close proximity with the diagnostic 'empirical' dialectic adopted by the Stoic school of thought and the school of Hippocratic medicine.¹⁵

We believe that we must add two further criteria that we emphasised in the previous chapter: assertion of the divine origin of the soul/psyche (*nafs*) and what pertains to that such as mystical or Sufi tendencies, on the one hand, and the lack of distinction between science and religion on the other. Here, Massignon sees that what facilitated the spread of Hermetism within Arab culture was its attribution to 'the prophet Idrīs' who is mentioned in the Qurʾān; although we appreciate

the importance of this factor, we do not see in it the only *'laissez-passer'*. Thus, Hermetism was one of the most powerful trends in the ancient heritage, and it occupied essential positions, even if only in its popular form, in almost all the regions where people adopted Islam – from Egypt to Persia – just as it had 'scholastic' centres predating Islam in Palestine, Apamea and Harran, as well as in other areas. Therefore, Hermetism was transmitted to Arab-Islamic culture within that 'geological composite' of views, sects and heresies which we term here: 'the ancient heritage'. To suggest that Islam had accepted it solely on the basis of its attribution to 'Prophet Idrīs' ought to be reconsidered: the Sunnis made war on it in general, and those who adhered to the religious 'rational' of the Arab *bayān* fought it with particular ferocity because it constituted the theoretical background of the Shī'ah and the esoteric sects of the Bāṭinīyah – the historical opponents of Sunnis. In any case, Aristotelian logic had been accepted within the fold of Islam among the Ash'arites themselves, without it being affiliated with the name of any prophet.

The Hermetic presence in Arab culture was universal, and it may have begun occupying some positions before the advocates of Hermetism had drawn this correspondence between the prophet Idrīs and Hermes. Thus, it might have been initially introduced through the portal of 'science' before it entered through that of philosophy and religion. So, ought we to begin with 'science'?

Hermes Trismegistus, the Occult and Translation

Indeed, the Arab sources agree that Khālīd bin Yazīd bin Mu'āwīyah (d. CE 85/683) was the first in Islam who worked on the ancient sciences and in particular alchemy, astrology and medicine; and he had transferred this knowledge from Alexandria, which as we previously indicated was the home of Hermetism. The demonstrations which follow will confirm the Hermetic origin of these sciences. Ibn al-Nadīm says of Khālīd bin Yazīd¹⁶ that 'he ordered Greek philosophers who were still in Egypt and who were fluent in Arabic to translate books in metallurgy from Greek and Coptic into Arabic', then he adds: 'and this was the first transfer in Islam from one language to another'.¹⁷ Thus, for the record, the first of that which was transferred into Arab-Islamic culture of 'the knowledge of the ancients' were the 'secret' magical Hermetic pseudo-sciences and from the original Hermetic source centre: Alexandria. Perhaps this alone is sufficient to

explain the position of the ancient Sunnis *vis-à-vis* the sciences of the ancients.¹⁸ Thus, the first known from the sciences of the ancients were the Hermetic sciences, which carried with them – besides their connections with magic – a religious creed contrary to that of Islam. Therefore, the position of the ancient *ahl al-sunnah* hostile to ‘the sciences of the ancients’ was due substantially to the Hermetic religious creed which underlies and is concealed, latent, within these sciences.

As for the path followed by these sciences, through translation, into Arab-Islamic culture, Ibn al-Nadīm mentions that a person, whom he sometimes calls ‘Stephanus the Ancient’ and at others ‘Stephanus the Monk’, had ‘transmitted to Khālīd bin Yazīd bin Mu‘āwīyah books on metallurgy and other’ and that he resided in Mosul and lived a long life.¹⁹ On the other hand, Jābir bin Ḥayyān mentions that Stephanus the Monk had a particular technique in ‘concoction’ (alchemical work for transforming base metals into gold), and that he was informed that ‘he learned this knowledge from Morienus [The Monk, Morienus the Greek] who was long sought by Khālīd bin Yazīd until he reached him by way of Jerusalem’ and when Morienus died, Stephanus the Monk succeeded him. Jābir bin Ḥayyān (the Latin Geber) mentions that when he contacted Stephanus the Monk and asked him about his method of concoction, he replied that, ‘It is the technique of Hermes Trismegistus’ which he explained it in a writing of his to his son Thoth.²⁰ We must add finally that Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (the Latin Rhazes), the famous physician, was also working in alchemy and that he composed a number of books and treatises on the subject. He had also learned from Jābir, from his books, as Ibn al-Nadīm reports in his writings on metallurgy: ‘Our teacher Abū Mūsā Jābir bin Ḥayyān says . . .’²¹ Therefore, there persists an unbroken chain from Abū Bakr al-Rāzī to Jābir bin Ḥayyān to Khālīd bin Yazīd bin Mu‘āwīyah to the Hermetic writings in Alexandria by Stephanus the Monk and Morienus and his teacher Adimuz who was described by O’Leary as ‘being distinguished for his studies of the books of Hermes [Trismegistus]’.²²

Consequently, the ‘resigned reason’ inherent in Hermeticism was the first thing to have been transmitted into Arab-Islamic culture from the elements of the ancient heritage, and this was through alchemy and astrology. The letters of Jābir bin Ḥayyān confirm this fact absolutely. And, as there is no way, due to constraints of space, to present the irrational Hermetic content of the letters of Jābir bin Ḥayyān in detail, suffice it to indicate some examples of particular significance.

The first example is related to the Hermetic cosmology of the universe based on the interconnected interrelation of its parts. Perhaps the best and

most concise expression that encapsulates this view is the assertion of Jābir that: ‘in all things there is an existence for all things’ and he relates this to the art of alchemy and adds: ‘yet in different kinds of extraction, thus, fire was in the stone yet unmanifest, and it belongs to it through [potential] force, so if it [the rock] is struck or used as a flint, it [fire] appears’.²³ This reminds us of the basic principle underlying Hermetic alchemy indicated in the previous chapter: ‘There is no nature except that it is attracted to another nature, and there is no nature except that it is repulsed by another nature.’ As for the principle of ‘sympathy and antipathy’, the seminal principle of the Hermetic theory of the oneness of the universe, we find it in the letters of Jābir bin Ḥayyān under the rubric of ‘similitude [al-*mumāthalah*] and apposition [al-*muqābalah*]’.

As for the second example, it pertains to Jābir’s theory of the soul. When he defines the soul he objects vehemently to the Aristotelian definition which posits that, ‘the soul is the perfection of a natural instrumental body possessed of a life force’ through which means that there is no independence of the soul from the body and consequently there is a form of interrelation obviating against a perception of the soul as an independent essence. Jābir adamantly opposed this and remarked that he rebutted Aristotle in a special book, then he mentions the definition he accepts, which is a Hermetic definition *par excellence*: ‘its determination [i.e., the soul] in our opinion is that it is a divine essence enlivening the bodies it assumes [lit., it wears], being humbled/defiled by its inhabiting of these “raiments” [i.e., the bodies]’.²⁴

As for the third example, it is related this time to the classification of knowledge. Jābir classifies knowledge into two categories: knowledge of the religion (*‘ilm al-dīn*) and knowledge of the world (*‘ilm al-dunyā*), and he categorises the knowledge of religion into 1) *legal* (*shar‘ī*), which is comprised of the knowledge of the manifest (*al-ẓāhir*) and the knowledge of the hidden (*al-bāṭin*); and 2) *rational* (*‘aqlī*), which is comprised of the knowledge of letters (*‘ilm al-ḥurūf*), under which are subsumed natural knowledge and spiritual knowledge, and the knowledge of meanings (*‘ilm al-ma‘ānī*) which is of two subdivisions: philosophical knowledge and divine knowledge, where philosophical knowledge subsumes the natural sciences and those of astrology, arithmetic and engineering. As for the knowledge of the world, it is of subdivisions: the science of metallurgy and the science of alchemy and its branches, as well as other arts which are in the service of alchemy. It is obvious that this classification is Hermetic *par excellence*, thus, in addition to being far from the Aristotelian classification of knowledge and sciences, the principle that governs it is

the combination of religion with the science and science with religion. The knowledge of religion, as we have seen, includes the knowledge of law (*ʿilm al-sharʿ*) and the ‘knowledge of letters’ (i.e., magic), as well as philosophy, astrology, biology, arithmetic and engineering and all of the theoretical knowledge underpinning alchemy. As for the ‘knowledge of the world’, it included only the practical arts of crafts. In addition to these categories, Jābir speaks of what he calls ‘the sciences of the septet’, which are the magical ‘occult sciences’, in glowing terms of reverence and glorification which could only emanate from the ‘resigned reason’ of Hermetism. He says, for instance, under the heading ‘Chapter on the Discussion of Properties of the Stars and their Influence on Countries, Tastes, Fauna, Flora and Stone’ (*bāb al-qawl ʿalā khawāṣṣ al-nujūm wa afʿālibā fī al-buldān wa al-ṭuʿūm wa fī al-ḥaywān wa al-nabāt wa al-ḥajar*). And after indicating the magical properties of the seven planets in their epicycles (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, the Sun and the Moon): ‘the septet is the knowledge which we have promised . . . and this septet is: a) the knowledge of medicine and what is actually in it; b) the knowledge of metallurgy and extracting what is in it; c) the knowledge of properties and what they are; d) the greatest and mightiest knowledge which is in disuse in our time – the proponents of which and those versed in it no longer exist, and by that I mean the knowledge of talismans; e) the great and mighty knowledge, unique among all knowledges, dearest, not comprehended or recognised, and about which no books have ever been written: the knowledge of utilizing the upper planets, including how to do this and what it entails; f) the knowledge of all nature, which is the knowledge of the balance (*ʿilm al-mīzān*); g) the knowledge of forms, which is the knowledge of creation/formation and extracting what is in it, for the purpose of extracting what is [potential] in force and putting it into action.’ Following this is the ‘Chapter on the Discussion of Medicine’ and Jābir classifies it into theoretical and practical, subdividing the theoretical into two categories: the theory of reason and the theory of the body. Likewise, the practical also divided into two categories, acts in the soul/psyche (*al-ʿamal fī al-naḥs*) and acts in the body (*al-ʿamal fī al-jism*) the act in the body, etc., then he presents the four natures and their interactions, and the outcome of this at the level of the universe as a whole, then at the level of the human body, to then deduce the Hermetic principle which compares the human to a microcosm, where he declares: ‘It is clear to you now the structure of the world, nature and the human being, so the world [*al-ʿālam*] is – of a necessity – a human being [*insān*], and the human being is a small part in addition to the world.’²⁵

The last example relates to the opinion of Jābir in the most important

philosophical issue that had occupied philosophers and theologians: namely the issue of the eternal (*al-qidam*) and incidental (*al-ḥudūth*). Here also, we find ourselves before a Hermetic view uncovering itself in regard to ‘resigned reason’ which orients it. Jābir says: ‘Know that discourse on the eternal and the incidental . . . is one of the most difficult matters for all the most revered and ancient philosophers hold it in reverence . . . and the masters of it are those who assiduously maintain and preserve it – from those who do not merit it – even if it were easy and tractable for them to acquire, if they were passive observers not in need of engaging thinking in indication or proofs or utilising utterance and similitude . . . and the matter of the eternal and the incidental is not according to what the ignorant among the *mutakallimūn* presumed in this issue – those who sought to deduce the unseen through the seen with increasing intransigence and who sought to derive the whole through the past despite the corruption which appears with such.’²⁶ Jābir rejects reason and its means and insists that the only path to knowledge of the ‘eternal’ (God) is by way of ‘witnessing’ (*al-mushāhadah*) the method of ‘disclosure’ (*al-kashf*), which does not need the ‘operations of thought in evidentiary indication (*dalīl*) or the use of utterance and similitude’. It is a way in complete contradiction with the technique of the Arab *bayān*, and consequently it consecrates an epistemological system based on ‘illumination’ (*al-ʿirfān*) against that of ‘demonstration’ (*al-bayān*).

This Hermetic tendency, or rather, this ‘resigned reason’ itself, can also be found with the greatest physician in Islam, Abū Bakr bin Zakarīyā al-Rāzī, known to the Latin West as Rhazes. Indeed, even the mighty al-Rāzī proceeded according to a ‘resigned reason’! In fact, we ought to distinguish with al-Rāzī, as we did for Ibn Sīnā,²⁷ between the physician practitioner basing his work on ‘experiments’ and the philosopher of irrationalism. And this was what Ṣāʿīd al-Andalusī concluded when he described al-Rāzī as being ‘indisputably the physician of the Muslims’ on the one hand and, on the other, a philosopher who ‘imitated ridiculous views and embraced ridiculous schools of thought’. The reason for this is that ‘he deviated sharply from Aristotle, chastising him for his breaking away from his mentor Plato and other advanced philosophers in many of their views; and he claimed that he [Aristotle] had corrupted philosophy and had altered a great deal of its circumstances.’²⁸ Ṣāʿīd contends that many of al-Rāzī’s books indicate that ‘he subscribed to the school of dualism in polytheism and the views of Brahmins in denying prophecy/prophethood and the belief of the ordinary masses of Sabians in transmigration of souls after death/reincarnation [*al-tanāsukh*]’, which places him with among the ‘later’ exponents whose books were classified under the school of Pythagoras and his

followers.²⁹ The same was recorded previously by al-Mas‘ūdī when he wrote of him saying, ‘He was classified under the Pythagorean school and was a supporter of it, and the last one classified as such was Abū Bakr bin Zakarīyā al-Rāzī.’³⁰ Al-Mas‘ūdī noted also that al-Rāzī had composed a book on ‘the schools of the Sabaens of Ḥarrān, to the exclusion of other Sabaens opposing them, and these were the alchemists, and he mentioned many things which are too lengthy to be mentioned here, and which would invite many people’.³¹ Ibn al-Nadīm noted that al-Rāzī wrote a book on ‘the necessity of invocation’ (*wujūb al-ad‘īyah*) just as he had a treatise on ‘the art of talismans [*ṣun‘at al-ṭalismāt*] cited by al-Majrīṭī in his book’,³² which indicates the interest of al-Rāzī in the Hermetic ‘occult’ knowledge of magic and his belief in it. Even al-Bayrūnī had mentioned that he read a book on ‘The Divine Knowledge’ by al-Rāzī, and found it ‘referencing in evidence the books written by Mani and in particular his hallmark book the Evangelion’ (i.e., the Gospel of Mani (*sifr al-asfār*)).³³

This was the other face of the famous physician al-Rāzī, the side underlying, epistemologically and philosophically, his ‘experimental’ medicine, as well as his Hermetic ‘black art’ alchemy. Thus, can we say after all that, that al-Rāzī was ‘a materialist’ or one of ‘the pioneers of materialism in Islam’? Rather, al-Rāzī was not a materialist, according to any definition of materialism. He was spiritually Gnostic, and the referential authority for his thinking was that philosophical ‘accumulation’ which was presented by al-Shahristānī and attributed to ‘the Seven Sages’, which was, in fact, a mixture of Neo-Platonism in its Oriental cast and Neo-Pythagoreanism; and al-Rāzī was nearer to the latter and to the Sabaen school of Hermetism in Ḥarrān. In fact, al-Rāzī denied prophecy, not from a rational, substantive standpoint, but from a *spiritual* Gnostic position. Thus, in his book (*al-Sīrah al-Falsafiyah*) *The Course of Philosophy*, he defends himself against those who disapprove that he should merit the title of ‘philosopher’. He argues that he deserves such distinction as he had composed several books in philosophy and that he had views on metaphysics, saying: ‘We need to base our matter in what is our intended goal in this treatise on the sources [*uṣūl*] that we have previously explicated in other books, to which we must have recourse in order to shorten this treatise. Among these are our book *The Divine Knowledge* and our book *That Those Who Are Characterised as Philosophers Cannot Engage in Geometry* (‘*Adhl man Ishtaghal bi-Fuḍūl al-Handasah min al-Mawsūmīn bi-l-Falsafah*) and our book *The Prestige of the Art of Alchemy* (*Sharaf Ṣinā‘at al-Kīmiyā*’) as well as our book *Spiritual Medicine* (*al-Ṭibb al-Rūḥānī*), as it is indispensable to our goal in this essay and the sources upon which the branches

of the course of philosophy are based upon. These are briefly cited in the following: we have a state after death, where we are either praised or humiliated, depending on our life course during the period when our souls are with our bodies. And the best reason for which we have been created is not to sate our physical appetites but to acquire knowledge and utilise justice which are the dual means for our salvation from this world, to the world where there is no death and no pain.³⁴ Therefore, can we say that al-Rāzī was a ‘materialist’? Or ‘rational’?

In fact, al-Rāzī begins his book entitled ‘Spiritual Medicine’ with ‘a eulogy’ to ‘reason’ (*al-‘aql*), but *which* ‘reason’ and from which perspective and in which framework? We will listen to him first, when he says: ‘God (*al-bārī*), may His name be magnified, gave us reason to reach and attain to benefits, sooner or later, with which we can realise and acquire the ultimate purpose of the essence within ourselves, and it is the greatest blessing of God upon us and the most beneficial of things and most vital for us . . . thus, we must not diminish its station, nor detract from its level nor transform it from that which governs to that which is governed, from that which holds the reigns to that which is bridled, from that which is followed to follower, but we resort in [all] matters to it and regard things through it, depend on it, and we commend what it commends, and refrain wherein it refrains. We must not empower whim which is its bane its despoiler and deviating from its norms, its argumentative force, its intent and its rectitude. We must abstain from (*al-hawā*) afflicting the sapient reason, and the rectifying consequences of its matter; rather we train it, guide it, we bear and compel it to heed what it commands and what it forbids.’³⁵ Many contemporary Arab writers compliant with the process of ‘self-enlightenment’ invoke the first part of this paragraph in support of al-Rāzī’s ‘rationalism’ and recollect his query with admiration: how could we transform reason ‘which is the governor into the governed . . .’? But such as these are oblivious of the *general context* of the idea of al-Rāzī. The intention here is not a eulogy of ‘reason’ as an epistemological authority, but as an ‘authority’ constraining ‘whim’ and ‘appetitive desires’ (*al-shahawāt*), and so on, or in other words, the ‘reason’ that al-Rāzī eulogises here is ‘the resigned reason’ which admits the necessity of limiting the ‘whim’ in the sphere of the process of the Hermetic ‘purification’ which facilitates communion with the spiritual world. His denial of prophecy/prophethood was from this standpoint – and this was the content and the purpose of his book *Spiritual Medicine*.

This Hermetic cast which carried ‘resigned reason’ into Islamic culture was not restricted to the alchemy of Jābir bin Ḥayyān and al-Rāzī and

their philosophy. Rather, the second knowledge that was transmitted to the Arabs from the ancient heritage was an occult Hermetic irrational knowledge as well. It was ‘astrology’ which was translated into Arabic by Khālid bin Yazīd as we have previously indicated, the interest in which subsequently increased during the reign of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Manṣūr who, the historical resources confirm, summoned astrologists whom he used to consult before any undertaking in all of his affairs. ‘Astrology’ is, in its very essence, based on the knowledge of the ‘resigned reason’ so there is no need to prolong discussion of it, and there is also no need to indicate the extent of its prevalence in Arab-Islamic culture, in spite of the prohibition of its practice by Islam, due to its attribution of influence to the stars and planets and making them *de facto* partners of God in effect. It is unnecessary also to give protracted consideration to another Hermetic knowledge which is *Nabatean Botany* (*al-Falāḥah al-Nabṭīyah*). It is reported of a book by the same title by Abū Ṭalīb Aḥmad bin al-Ḥusayn Zayyāt the Shī‘ite (d. AH 340) that Ibn Waḥshīyah dictated it to him, along with a series of books on magic and talismans.³⁶ The book on Nabatean botany is a Hermetic book, as was indicated by Massignon in his aforementioned study on the Arab Hermetic literature. This book does not study plants for their own sake, but for their magical ‘medical’ use, emanating from the same Hermetic conception of the universe – based on the mutual influence between the stars and terrestrial organisms, and with regard to plants in the first instance. It is ‘la botanique astrologique’, as Festugière called it.³⁷

Hermetic Gnosticism and Creed

If we move now from the field of knowledge and the sciences to the sphere of creeds, we find the Hermetic presence at an early stage within the suppositions of some early *mutakallimūn* and in particular the (extremist) *ghulāt*, the *rāfiḍah* (i.e., the Shī‘ah) and the Jahmīyah. All evidences indicate that Kūfah was a centre of Hermetism even before the Era of Codification. If we are not able to make a decisive determination about the issue of whether Hermetism had been transported to Kūfah from Babylon and Wāsiṭ, where the ‘early Sabaens’ were located in Iraq, or whether it was directly connected with Alexandria, then what is known in the history of ‘*al-kalām*’ as the sects of the *ghulāt* and *rāfiḍah* in addition to some early Sufi personalities was originally centred in Kūfah. Thus, in addition to Jābir bin Ḥayyān of Kūfah (as he is cited in all references) whose direct connection with

the Hermetic sources was previously elucidated, it seems, as Massignon says: that ‘the early *ghulāt* among the Shī‘ites of Kūfah were exposed to Hermetic texts’³⁸ and therefore, ‘it is not strange that Shī‘ah were the first to become Hermeticised in Islam’ and that Islam ‘had known Hermeticism before knowing Aristotle and his *Metaphysics*’, as cited by Henry Corbin who, reiterated the same assertions of Massignon.³⁹

Actually, numerous treatises written by the *ghulāt* and *rāfiḍah* which are undoubtedly Hermetic, have vindicated many books and articles on the sects. Given that we will return in the forthcoming chapter to shed light on the ideological content of the suppositions of *ghulāt*, we will restrict ourselves here to merely a brief allusion to the tenets of some sects of the *ghulāt* where the Hermetic character is obvious. What has come down to us of ‘the Bayānīyah’ (affiliated to Bayān bin Sam‘ān who was killed in AH 119) constitutes Hermetic ‘fragments’. Among these we find ‘that God almighty is in the form/image of the human being’ and the claims of the master of this sect, ‘who calls upon Venus – *al-zuhrah* [i.e., the planet] and it answers him, and that he does that by [i.e., in the name of] the greatest name [*bi-l-ism al-a‘zam*]’.⁴⁰ It is well known that the Hermetic religious philosophy holds that ‘God created the human in his image’,⁴¹ namely in the image or form of God himself, and consequently, God and humans are both of the same image. Additionally, the phrase ‘by the greatest name’ is a Hermetic saying, and the Hermetic literature associates with it the effect of a supernatural power so that whoever knows it can achieve supernatural things.

As for the opinions of Mughīrah al-Bijlī (or possibly al-‘Ijlī) who was also murdered in AH 119, ‘he used to say that he was a prophet and that he knew the greatest name of God’, and that God ‘is a man of light [*rajuḷ min nūr*], with a crown on his head, and he has the limbs and features like that of a man, and he has insides and a heart from which emanates wisdom’. At the beginning of creation, he was ‘alone and there was nothing with him, so when he desired to create things he spoke in the name of his greatest name [*bi-ismihī al-a‘zam*]’⁴² and these tenets and views, in addition to the final legends about the process of creation, have an obvious and entirely Hermetic character.

Other similar views appear with the Khaṭṭābīyah (in reference to followers of Abū al-Khaṭṭāb bin Abū Zaynab) supposed that ‘all that occurs in their hearts is revelation [*wahy*], and that every believer receives revelation’. Many of them were involved in ‘theurgy, spells (*nirnajāt*), stars and alchemy’,⁴³ which leaves no room for doubt in their bona fide connection to the Hermetic literature.

It should be noted here that all sects of *rāfiḍah* Shī‘ah, or rather all Shī‘ites except the Zaydīs, have denied the possibility of attaining to the knowledge of God by way of theoretical suppositions (*al-naẓar*) and analogy (*al-qiyās*). This is because ‘they suppose that all knowledge is compulsory, and that all creation is compelled and that theoretical suppositions and analogy do not lead to knowledge and the slaves [i.e., human beings] do not worship God by means of these’,⁴⁴ and this is one of the consequences of the Hermetic ‘oneness’ (*tawḥīd*) as we have seen in the previous chapter. It is true that this might seem to be in contradiction with ‘anthropomorphism’ (*al-tajsīm*) which appears manifestly in the previous texts attributed to the *ghulāt*. Yet, this is only an apparent contradiction. The *ghulāt* were neither mujassimīn nor mushabbihīn, but they co-opted useful terminology of anthropomorphism in the scope of their theory of ‘incarnation’ (*al-ḥulūl*), namely the pantheistic incarnation of God in their imams, and this is an issue we will elucidate in the next chapter.

The *ghulāt* and *rāfiḍah* were not the only ones who employed the vestiges of Hermetic views, but the views of the Jahmīyah (attributed to the followers of Jahm bin Ṣafwān, d. AH 128) are also derivative from the Hermetic conception of the supreme transcendent God, and the Jahmīyah assert that ‘God is not a thing, and not from a thing nor in a thing; and the description of any thing is not applicable to him nor is the knowledge of anything or even the whimsical idea of any thing.’ And also [they asserted that]: ‘God is a thing not like [other] things, not subject to description, cognisance, whimsical concept, light, hearing, sight, speech or discussion . . . and they denied that God almighty is in the heavens, and they denied the seat [*al-kursī*] and the throne [*al-‘arsh*], and that God is above it or above the heavens in relation to that; and they said that God is in every place . . .’⁴⁵ As these sayings are almost verbatim translations of Hermetic texts which we presented in the previous chapter, there is no need for comment.

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If we move now to the early Sufis, perhaps the personage whom we may initially encounter is Abū Hāshim al-Kūfī (d. AH 150) who was the first to be termed a ‘Sufi’ as all sources concur, and some references note that the Shī‘ah called him ‘the inventor of Sufism’ and that Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, the great Shī‘ite Imam, described him saying: ‘he greatly corrupted the creed, he innovated his own *madhab* called Sufism [*al-taṣawwuf*] and rendered

it the repository of his despicable creed'. It is also said that he used to assert [the doctrine of] 'union [with the divine]' (*al-ittiḥād*) as well as 'incarnation' (*al-ḥulūl*), and that he was indecisive between these two assertions.⁴⁶ Since Kūfah was the main source of Hermeticism, as we have previously indicated, it is a simple matter to connect the Sufism of Kūfah with the alchemy of Jābir bin Ḥayyān – 'the Sufi from Kūfah', as well as with the suppositions of the Shī'ite *ghulāt*. We must add here another more prominent Sufi personality, al-Karkhī (d. AH 200), with whom we find the 'first definition of Sufism in its gnostic sense', and he may have been of Mandaean Sabian (Hermetic) origin from the governate of Wāsiṭ in Iraq, near Kūfah.⁴⁷ As for the third personality who is better known for belonging to the Hermetic trend in the arena of Sufism and alchemy together, he is Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. AH 245) and considered by Nicholson to be 'the most worthy among Sufis by far to be termed the founder of Sufism'.⁴⁸ As for his belonging to the Hermetic trend, al-Qifṭī informs us in clear terms that: 'Dhū al-Nūn Ibrāhīm al-Akhmīmī is of the same category as Jābir bin Ḥayyān in embracing the art of alchemy and imitating the esoteric [occult] knowledge and is well versed in much philosophical knowledge. He used to often frequent Birbā district of Akhmīm, as it is one of the ancient houses of wisdom . . . and it is said that he introduced the path of *wilāyah* in it and he had a wide reputation.'⁴⁹ It seems that Egypt, and Alexandria in particular, was the main centre from which proto-Sufism emerged before and after Islam, and spread to the rest of the Arab countries: Adam Metz mentions that 'Epiphanius [Nonnus of Panopolis] complained, during the fourth century CE, that there was still a large number of gnostics (illuminationists) *ʿirfāniyūn*, (Hermetics) whose behaviour cannot be disciplined, and many of their views have crept into mystic groups'. Similarly it is related by the historian al-Kindī that 'in the year AH 200, a sect [people] called Sufis [*al-ṣufīyah*] appeared in Alexandria . . .'⁵⁰

Discussion would be prolonged if we were to follow the traces of the Hermetic traditions, the tradition of the 'resigned reason', with the early *mutakallimūn* among the *ghulāt*, *rāfiḍah* and the Jahmīyah as well as early Sufis; therefore, it is sufficient to refer to the previous indications, especially since it is not our intent here to provide a history of the *kalām* or Sufism, or to elucidate the foreign traces in them.⁵¹ What really interests us here is to confirm our previous allegation where we stated that the first contact of Arabs with elements of the ancient heritage, in the early phase of the Era of Codification or even shortly before it,⁵² belonged to the irrational of the reason' – to the outcomes of the 'resigned reason'. It seems

that the previous confirmations would suffice us to move to the second part of the same assertion, where we intend to affirm that as much as Arab thought was advancing with the Codification (in translation and the authoring of works of original scholarship), so did the 'resigned reason' carried within, Hermetism and the Oriental version of Neo-Platonism, occupy essential and firmly rooted position within Arab-Islamic culture. This was not only true amid Shī'ah and esoteric, mystic and philosophical streams, but we also find it amidst the Sunni thought itself. It is the 'learned' form of Hermetism which we see occupying positions in various spheres of Arab-Islamic thought, in terms of doctrine and knowledge, from the mid-third century of the Hijrah onwards. And perhaps this is due to what we have indicated in the previous chapter of the wide dissemination of Hermetic writings during the second stage of translation in Islam, when the '*majlis al-ta'lim*' (education council) had been moved to Harran, during the rule of Mutawakkil and then subsequently moved, books and masters, shortly afterwards to Baghdad. Therefore, from this period onwards we are confronting, not 'fragments' of a Hermetic trend, but complete theories and conceptual orders exhibiting explicitly or implicitly their belonging to Hermetism.

The Epistles the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā

Conceivably, the first thing which strikes the attention at this stage in the evolution of the Hermetic presence and its resigned reason in Arab-Islamic culture are the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* (*The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*), a massive compendium of 52 treatises in an epistolary style. In fact, these epistles form a complete Hermetic code, despite its claims to draw from all schools of thought and religions and that it employs some aspects of Aristotelian thought, and despite also that it takes an Islamic guise, but only transparently. It does not conceal the fact that it belongs to Hermetism as it refers repeatedly to Hermes Trismegistus, and to Agathodaemon and Pythagoras, in addition to adopting the theory of the supreme transcendent God, who cannot be described, and the theory of the absolute reason (*al-'aql al-kulli*), charged with contemplating the universe. This is in addition to stressing the divine nature of the human soul/psyche (*nafs*) and the necessity of 'exercising it' and training it through knowledge and asceticism (*al-zuhd*), in order to completely regain its divine, spiritual nature, which will enable it to connect with the divine world. We must also add that the tremendous attention to or even the desperate

defence of the ‘occult’ Hermetic knowledges, and its broad exposition of their content, such as the pseudosciences of astrology, alchemy, magic, talismans and spells, as well as other products of ‘resigned reason’.

As for the defence of the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* of this ‘resigned reason’, it is repeated continuously and in different styles, and we will be restricted the notion of some indications later in context. They say: ‘Know, dear brothers [*ikhwān*] . . . that no one ought to speak of the essence [*dhāt*] of God [*al-bārī*] the Most Exalted, nor of his characteristics by conjecture or guesswork, and none should engage in debate of these except after purifying the soul, as it might lead to scepticism, bewilderment and going astray’, and the purpose of purifying the soul is uncovering of ‘the straight path [*al-ṭarīq al-mustaqīm*] towards God the Most Magnificent and Glorious . . . and the disclosure [*al-kashf*] of divine vital matters and the host of secrets that we have defined as divine inspiration or which we have extracted from the interpretations of the books of its trustees and the revelations of its prophets . . . including the cause of the initiation of the creation of the world when it had previously been non-existent; the occurrence of the soul and its delusions; and the creation of the progenitor Adam and the reason for his disobedience . . . as well as the reason for the making of the pact with the descendants of Adam and the accounts of the resurrection . . . because among people, there are those who are wise, distinguished and philosophers, who if they think about these things and analyse them with their reason, they will not perceive their true meanings, and if they consider them according to what the apparent meaning of the utterances of revelation, their reasons will not accept them, and thus, they will fall into doubt and confusion.’

The *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*) explain the difference between the *mutakallimūn* in their debates and the lack of agreement of ‘all philosophers and legalists’ and their fall into ‘disputes and contradictions’ due to their ‘not having a single sound source principle nor a means of analogy at the requisite level which could respond to all these questions in regard to or about this means of analogy, but their source principles were different and their means of analogy were various and unequal’, and then they add: ‘You must know brothers . . . responding to various sources and judging through unequal modes of analogy is contradictory and incorrect, and we have responded to all these matters and more of similar issues from [the standpoint of] a one source principle and a single mode of analogy which is the image/form of the human being . . . and commensurate with whomever would claim preeminence in the true sciences . . . is that it is demanded of such to respond

according to a single source principle and analogy. It is not possible for him but to take as his source the image/form of the human being from among all things in existence . . . and if he does so, then all will agree about a single opinion and a single religion and a single *madhab* [school] and differences will be alleviated and the truth clarified for all, and that will be reason for the salvation of all.⁵³

The Brethren of Purity attack the *mutakallimūn* for their use of the analogy of the unseen (*in absentia*) on the basis of what is witnessed (*in praesentia*), and they warn their followers about them as they are ‘sharp-tongued *dajjālūn* [anti-Christ], blind-hearted, sceptical of facts and astray from the truth’.⁵⁴ Similarly, they assault philosophers, saying: ‘You must know that for every prophet sent by Allāh, the first to disavow him were the elders of his own people, those versed in and given to philosophy, theory and debate.’⁵⁵ And one of their signature views in this regard can be ascertained when they say: ‘Do not imitate the utterances of the philosophers of divergent views and contradictory assertions, as it has been reported that Aristotle was mentioned in an audience with the Prophet and he said: ‘If he had lived long enough to come to know what I have brought, he would have followed me in my religion.’⁵⁶ As for logic, those who need it among people are those who still have their souls immersed in their physical bodies: ‘But, the pure souls, which are not incarnate, are in no need of theology [*al-kalām*] and categories in order to comprehend some of these knowledges and significations of thoughts through each other, these are astral souls that have been purified from the filth of physical desires . . . therefore they are not in need of reported things [*al-akhbār*] of the conscience nor of hidden secrets as they are in [a state of] illumination and light [*al-ishrāq wa al-anwār*], which constitutes the *essence* of reported things and reverence’, and immediately they follow this with the assertion: ‘So my brother you must endeavour, so that your soul may become purified and your concern raised above desire for this low world’, so that it may attain the level of the astral souls.⁵⁷

As for the principle that they affirm, and which they claim is the only one that can explain the reality of the world and achieve the oneness of thought among people, it is that Hermetic principle which we identified in the previous chapter – the principle of comparing the world to a human being: thus, the world (i.e., the macrocosm) is ‘a vast human being’ because it is ‘a single body with all its astrological orbits, its heavenly levels as well as the elements of its mothers and their offspring . . . and it has one soul, the power of which circulates in every part of its body similar to the circulation of the soul of a human being in every part of his body’,⁵⁸ and

‘the human being is a microcosm [lit., a miniature world]’ because he is ‘the combination of a physical body and a spiritual soul altogether’ and ‘in the makeup of the structure of his body there are similitudes for all existing things in the physical world including the wonders of the compositions of its orbits and the divisions of its zodiac and the movement of its planets’. As for his soul it has resemblance to ‘the categories of spiritual beings including angels and *jinn*’,⁵⁹ and considering this resemblance, or even correspondence, between the human being and the world, we find that the ‘course of the governance of the world as well as the course of its matters in all existing things in their various forms . . . is the same as the course as that of a single human being or a single animal in all of its different parts and various forms . . . and the governance of this flow pervading the power of the soul of the world, with all its parts, is like the governance of this flow pervading the power of the soul of a single human being in all the parts and joints of his body’.⁶⁰

It is not only this, but the correspondence posited in the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* between the human being and the world is also that between these two and society or the state, and here we find ourselves before a conspicuous political and ideological utilisation of Hermetic philosophy and religion: thus, just as the world runs its course and just as a universal soul pervades it, similarly to the soul of the human being which pervades his body, so the same applies to societies and states where a ‘prophetic’ soul of an imam of the descendants of the Prophet must pervade, assisted by propagandists, advocates and heralds. And, if we do not find in the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* an explicit indication of this ideological and political dimension, this is because it appeared in the ‘houses of occult’ on the one hand, and because it represents the ‘popular’ form of Ismā‘īli philosophy on the other; this form which we consider ‘learned’, organised and harmonised with the famous Ismā‘īli propagandist Aḥmad Ḥāmīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. AH 11) in his book entitled *Rāḥat al-‘Aql* (*The Comfort of Reason*) which represents, in fact, the most elevated that Ismā‘īli thought produced in the context of *madhab*, reflects Hermetic metaphysics clearly and completely.

Al-Kirmānī asserts that God is a mere identity (*huwiyyah*), indescribable and inexpressible, as he is both ‘undescribed/indescribable’ (*lāmauṣūf*) and ‘not-indescribable’ (*lālāmauṣūf*). ‘He, the Most Exalted, is not attained by means of any quality or characteristic, and he is not of a body nor in any body; He cannot be conceptualised by means of any possessed of reason nor can he be perceived by any possessed of sense.’⁶¹ Also, ‘He has neither an opposite nor an analogue’ and ‘there are no words in any

language that can describe Him according to that which he merits'.⁶² Further, 'the most sincere assertions in oneness [*al-tawḥīd*], praise, glorification and affirmation, are those which are from the standpoint of denying the qualities found in existing things and absolving Him of these.'⁶³

We are here confronting a Hermetic perception of the supreme transcendent God, not realizable through the senses nor through reason. And as for his station and what is below it, what al-Kirmānī describes sometimes as 'the primordial existence' (*al-mawjūd al-awwal*) and alternatively as 'the first principle' (*al-mabda' al-awwal*) and in other instances as 'the primary reason' (*al-ʿaql al-awwal*) which is 'the prime originator' (*al-mubdi' al-awwal*) and 'the preceding perfection' (*al-kāmil al-sābiq*) and 'the nearest king [*al-malak al-muqarrab*] and the greatest name [*al-ism al-aʿzam*]'⁶⁴ and that 'He is the prime mover [*al-muḥarrik al-awwal*] of all moving things . . . and that he is the cause [*al-ʿillah*] for everything other than Himself, and He is not in need of anything, in any act, other than himself, and that he is reason itself and cognizant of His essence and known to Himself'.⁶⁵ It is clear that this primordial existence which is the 'raison d'être of every other thing' and which is in a subsidiary station second to that of the supreme transcendent God, is in precise conformity to 'God the Maker' in Hermetic religious philosophy. He is the intermediary between the one supreme God, and – from this standpoint – his oneness, and between the proliferating world, and – from this standpoint – its proliferation.

After this comes the theological discourse on 'the means of emission' (*kayfiyat al-inbiʿāth*), namely the manner by which the emission of heavenly and earthly beings transpires; al-Kirmānī says: 'the emission is some kind of [auto] reaction [*infiʿāl*], and not of an initial intent', and it is an existence ensuing from a thing combining matters, one which is encompassing and the other which is encompassed so this immanent essence is pleased when it realises itself and its connection to it, consequently, an extrinsic thing occurs which is confirmed by the evidencing thing itself'. Therefore, the emission of beings does not take place by 'emanation' (*al-fayḍ*) as some philosophers assert (al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā) and neither by creation *ex nihilo* as some theologians assert, but by 'emission' which is a 'radiance of light' (*suṭū' nūr*) from the primary reason resulting from 'its self-exultation'.⁶⁶ The first being that comes into existence with this 'emission' is 'the primary emitter' (*al-munba'ith al-awwal*), which is the secondary reason (*al-ʿaql al-thānī*) known as 'the pen' (*al-qalam*) in the divine *sunnah* (norm)' and it 'persists in action, (*qā'im bi-l-fiʿil*) yet 'despite that it ranks second in existence according to the original echelon but it is first in emission',⁶⁷ and it is accorded a station of 'the secondary emitter',

where the primary persists by force, which is the primordial matter known as ‘the tablet’ (*al-lawḥ*) according to the divine *ṣunnah*’ for it is susceptible to forms and characterised by acceptance (*al-qubūl*), just as the board accepts from the pen images of lines, which are known by the primordial matter and the existence of which is associated with the image.’⁶⁸

Following this comes the discourse on ‘the supernal letters which are the noble principles in the world of the primary emission’⁶⁹ (the seven ethereal reasons) and subsequently the discourse on ‘nature’ and its definition and ‘the seat’ (*al-kursī*) which is the near king, the mover, the prime motivator in whatever he moves, the moving form when he is in it, which is called ‘the orbit’ (*al-falak*)⁷⁰ and then in what follows this, ‘the throne [*al-‘arsh*] which is the mover, the primary motivator in whatever it moves, which is the “highest orbit”’.⁷¹ Later comes the discourse on the orbits and bodies in the heavenly world, then ‘the existing things of the upper bodies from the lower bodies and their states’ until the discourse ends in explaining the reality of the human speaking (*al-nāṭiq*) soul and that whereby it attains to joy and the way in which it connects with the holy spirit (*al-rūḥ al-muqaddas*), and this is followed by the discourse on revelation and miracles, etc.⁷²

This is the metaphysical framework which al-Kirmānī recovers entirely from Hermetism and which corresponds to the framework of the socio-political and religious order of the Ismā‘īlis, and this correspondence is what he terms ‘the prophetic art’ (*al-ṣun‘ah al-nabawwīyah*). Thus, with the exception of the supreme transcendent God, who has no equivalent in ‘the prophetic art’, the ‘supernal boundaries’ (heavenly beings, intelligences and orbits) are equivalent in the systemised Ismā‘īli ‘prophetic’ armature of the so-called ‘nether boundaries’. Therefore, the primary existence is the original reason – *al-‘aql al-awwal* (God the Maker) the station of which is the upper orbit, equivalent in the systemised structure of Ismā‘īlites: ‘the elocutor’ (the prophet) and his station is that of ‘revelation’ (receiving revelation). As for the second(ary) existence which is the primary emitter or the secondary reason or the ‘pen’, it is equivalent to ‘the basis’ (*al-asās*) (the designated successor – ‘Alī) and his station is that of ‘interpretation’ (*al-ta’wīl*). As for the third existence, it is the primordial matter (*al-hayūlā*) or ‘the tablet’ (*al-lawḥ*) and is equivalent to ‘the Imam’ which is in the station of ‘command’ (*al-amr*) – the enumeration continues thus until the tenth existence of ‘the supernal boundaries’ in the station below the orbit of the natures and is in apposition to ‘the fragmented shards’ (*al-mukāsir*) in the station of ‘the attraction of the responsive souls’, which is the lowest degree in the echelon of the order

of the systematic Ismā'īli socio-political framework.

This ideological utilisation by Ismā'īli philosophers of Hermetic religious philosophy does not concern us here. What concerns us is the *form* of the presence of the 'resigned reason' in this ideological philosophy. The correspondence concluded by al-Kirmānī, and other Ismā'īli philosophers, between the supernal boundaries and the nether boundaries concerns us in terms of what it establishes as a Hermetic hierarchical ranking in the sphere of knowledge: thus, just as 'knowledge' (*al-ma'rifah*) is sequential from the heavenly intelligences (*al-ʿuqūl al-sāmawīyah*), diminishing in value and comprehensiveness from the superior levels to the inferior, so is the sequence of knowledge in regard to human intellects (*ʿuqūl*) in the circles of '(illuminationist) knowers – *al-ʿarifīn*' for Ismā'īlis from 'the designated successor – *al-waṣīy* [i.e., 'Alī]'⁷³ to 'the fragmented shards (*al-mukāsir*)' which are in the lowest degree in the echelon of knowledge. And in all states and at all levels in this hierarchy, it is not possible to obtain knowledge except through one of the members in the chain. In other words, there is no knowledge without a 'teacher' (*mu'allim*). The idea of a teacher is a central one in Ismā'īli philosophy, and it is of a Hermetic origin as we have seen in the previous chapter. Al-Ghazālī explains the reason for his designating the Ismā'īlis as the '*al-ta'limīyah*' (i.e., the affiliates of instruction/learning)', as: 'They were termed such because the principle of their schools [*madhāhib*] is the annulment of opinion and the annulment of the action of reason, and calling all creation to learn [*al-ta'lim*] from the infallible Imam, and that none can realise knowledge except by learning. They initiate their debate by saying: the truth is either known by opinion or it is known by learning, and it has become invalid to seek recourse to opinion for the reason that opinion is susceptible to whims and differences in terms of the theoretical conclusions of those possessed of sound reason [*al-ʿuqalāʾ*].'⁷⁴

Therefore, the intellectual endeavour by the Ismā'īli philosophers, especially al-Kirmānī, was purposed to demonstrate that knowledge (*al-ma'rifah*) is not achieved by way of the reason, but that there must be a 'teacher' and he is the 'Imam'. Hereupon, the Ismā'īlis, and in general the Shī'ites – except for the Zaydīs – attack the techniques of demonstration (*al-istidlāl*), from the analogical reasoning (*al-qiyās*) of the *kalām* and *fiqh* to Aristotelian analogy. Certainly, this Ismā'īli philosophy, this philosophy-ideology, is the outcome of the work of reason, reasoning at a high level, yet its goal is not to posit the authority of reason and render it supercedent over every other authority, but it rather intends the contrary. Its aim is the *denial* of reason, which takes the form of a huge mental effort for the purpose of justifying and consecrating the resignation of reason.⁷⁵

Hermetic Influences on Sufism

In addition to this systematic ‘scholastic’ employment of Hermetic religious philosophy by the Ismā‘īlī philosophers, there is a similar utilisation of Hermetic mysticism by Sufis in Islam. We have previously emphasised the Hermetic origin of the inclinations of early Sufis, and now we will indicate the resemblance or even the correspondence between the two types of Hermetic Sufism and the theoretical background for the ‘theorisation’ of Islamic Sufis: those among them who assert ‘union [with the divine]’ (*al-ittiḥād*) and ‘self-annihilation’ (*al-fanāʿ*), and those who claim [the possibility of] ‘incarnation’ (*al-ḥulūl*).

Although al-Junayd (Abū al-Qāsim bin Muḥammad, d. AH 297) is considered the consolidator or even the actual founder of ‘Sunni Sufism’ after his instructor in the *ṭarīqah* (i.e., the Sufi order/lodge) Ḥārith Muḥāsibī (d. AH 243), and despite that he observed himself the distinction between Sunni Sufism and the Sufism of others, such as that of the ‘apostates’ (*al-malāḥidah*) and the ‘heretics’ (*al-zanādiqah*), by his affirmation on numerous occasions – as it is reported by his disciples and companions in his *ṭarīqah* – that ‘whoever does not memorise the Qurʾān and has not written down *ḥadīth* [traditions from the Prophet], shall not be followed in this matter, for our knowledge is constrained by the Book [Qurʾān] and the *sunnah* [prophetic norms].’⁷⁶ Despite all this, the views of al-Junayd on the (divine) oneness (*al-tawḥīd*) and the soul (*nafs*) and its nature, source and fate are entirely Hermetic views: ‘A sect of Sufism considered that the intellectual, conceptual oneness of the reason [*al-tawḥīd al-ʿaqlī*] (that is, the concept of oneness of the *mutakallimūn* and that of the philosophers) is the oneness of the ordinary masses, and it spoke of a second type of oneness (the oneness of the specialised elite) which is the oneness of the heart and the witnessed [*tawḥīd al-qalb wa al-shuhūd*]; and in this regard, it was guided by Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd al-Baghdādī who had the distinction of transmitting *al-tawḥīd* from the theological realm of the *kalām* to that of Sufism, or from the realm of theoretical reasoning to that of spiritual experience, and he wrote a special treatise in this regard.’⁷⁷ The theory of al-Junayd on the (concept of the) ‘oneness of the specialised elite’ (*tawḥīd al-khawāṣ*) can be summarised in the concept that if the aspiring Sufi reaches the level of self-annihilation (*al-fanāʿ*) or union (*al-ittiḥād*), he becomes ‘a phantom spirit [*shabāh*] persisting between the hands of Allāh, where there is no third between them, the dispositions of his ordination course over him in the flow of the dictates of his capacity in the deep depths of the sea of his oneness through the annihilation of his self and attributing the truth

to him, and His responding to him through the realities of his existence and unicity in the reality of his proximity, by leading his senses and directing actions so that truth may prevail in what He desires from him. And the knowledge in that, is that the last slave had returned to his initial state, to be as he was before he came into being.⁷⁸ In another text, he presents the stages of development, beginning from the mere cognisance of God and the denial of all descriptive attributes for him, up to a stage of communication with him, and the demonstration (*al-bayān*) of him, then the disappearance of demonstration and the falling into bewilderment and eventually desisting from attempting to describe him: ‘With his departure from description he falls into the true reality of existence for him [*ḥaqīqat al-wujūd lahu*], and from the truth about his existence he reaches the true reality of the witnessed [*ḥaqīqat al-shuhūd*] with his departure from his existence, and with the loss of his existence his existence is purified, and with his purity he absents description, and with his absence his universality becomes presence, and with the presence of his universality his universality is lost, so he was extant and lost as well as lost and extant; so he was where he was not, and he was *not* where he was, then he came to be after he had not been where he was.’⁷⁹

As for al-Junayd’s theory of the soul, which is organically connected to his theory of self-annihilation (*al-fanā’*) and the oneness of the witnessed (*tawḥīd al-shuhūd*), it reminds us also of what we identified in the previous chapter of the Hermetic views concerning the divine origin of the soul and its tormented, separate existence in this life and the necessity of its struggle to return to its original divine world. Furthermore, we find with al-Junayd clear echoes of the theory of Numenius on the soul, in the sense that it was originally a part of the god. In this context, al-Junayd sees that human souls were in existence even before being connected with bodies and this was in ‘the [ethereal] world of atoms’ (*‘ālam al-dharr*) (that is, ‘the divine world’) and in this existence it was in direct communion with God. Al-Junayd associates this view with the verse of ‘*al-mīthāq*’ (the pact): when Allāh addressed the progeny of Adam (i.e., human beings), asking: ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They replied: ‘Yes.’ (*al-a‘rāf* Q 7: 172)⁸⁰ He addressed them ‘when they did not exist except through his existence, for they existed for truth [*li-l-ḥaqq*] without their existing for themselves . . . then these are those whom he caused to exist with him. Those whom he had created in the eternal [state of] being, with him, in stations of oneness with Him before He transferred them by his desire and then made them as atoms, taking them out by His will as a creation and placing

them in the loins of Adam [*ṣulb Ādam*].⁸¹ However, their going out into the world of creation – that is, the sensate world – is a reversion and a restriction, or even a diminution, because it is tantamount to the loss of existence of a different kind,

the loss of the unseen blessings and the most joyful existence . . . thus, the human being in his lowly earthy existence is, in one regard, *found* [in existence] [*mawjūd*], yet in another, *lost* [*mafqūd*], he is existing through his forms, his meanings, his traces and his attributes, namely existing through things, except he is lost in his existence through the truth, and similarly, he is in constant yearning to unite with Him [i.e., with God], namely to rid himself of the state of separation for the state of union [*ḥālat al-jamʿ*], and this can only be achieved if the soul is annihilated and dead to everything and every action of it and to every meaning. To the extent that the soul is dead to all forms and meanings, it will achieve persistence/immortality [*al-baqāʾ*], and immortality is when the truth prevails in souls, and when these souls persist in it and *for* it. Hereupon, the human being transcends the reality of presence, and the last slave returns to the way he was originally and comes to be in a state of union with the unicity of truth [*aḥadīyat al-ḥaq*], whereupon the unseen [*al-ghayb*] opens up before him which is a perception [*dhawq*], and this is the meaning of oneness [*al-tawḥīd*].⁸²

If we proceed now to those who asserted ‘incarnation’ (*al-ḥulūl*) and at the forefront of these is al-Ḥallāj (who was executed in AH 309 following the death sentence meted out to him by the *fuqahāʾ*), we will find ourselves before the second category of Hermetic mysticism termed by Festugière ‘mysticism by introversion’. Al-Ḥallāj is famous for his dictum: ‘I am the Truth’ (*anā al-ḥaq*) and this is an expression and a yearning in his book *al-Ṭawāṣīn*, which encapsulates all his doctrine. He sees that Sufi exercises and endeavours of struggle reveal to the human being the divine form/image within him, according to the ancient maxim: ‘God created Adam in his image’, this being the Hermetic encomium which we noted in the previous chapter. It should be noted that Sunnis understand the [third-person possessive] pronominal suffix (his) attached to the term ‘image/form’ to refer to the *human being*, where the meaning would be that God created humans in the form/image in which he created *them* – that is, in the form which He desired for them. As for al-Ḥallāj, he held that the possessive pronominal suffix (his) refers to God, just as the Hermetic literature does. Al-Ḥallāj explains how God created humans in *His own* image (i.e., the image of God) in his book *al-Ṭawāṣīn*, and says:

The Truth manifested for Himself in eternity before creation was created and before creation was known, and there transpired for Him in the presence of His oneness with Himself a speech [*ḥadīth*] without utterance or letters, and He witnessed praises of Himself within His self, and in eternity, with the presence of the Truth and nothing else he gazed at itself and adored it and praised itself so this was a manifestation of itself to itself, in the form of exalted love, beyond all description and limits, and this love was the cause of existence [*ʿillat al-wujūd*] and the reason for the vast multiplicity of [forms of] existence, then the Truth [i.e., God], glory be to Him, desired to see this self-love [*ḥubb al-dhāt*] represented in an external form, in order to witness it and to address it, so He gazed into eternity and brought forth *ex nihilo* an image of Himself which had all His characteristics and names; and this was Adam, whom Allāh had made according to His image for all time. And when God created Adam as such, He glorified and lauded him and he chose him for Himself, and He is from where the Truth manifested in his image, in and through him, He is as he is [*huwwa huwwa*].⁸³

In his *diwān* of poetry, al-Ḥallāj wrote many explicit verses affirming the incarnation of God in the human being in the form we have seen in the Hermetic literature in the previous chapter, such as when he addresses God:

You are the wellspring of my existence
 O my logic, my expression, my gesture [you are]
 O the all of my all, O my hearing, O my sight
 O my entirety and my pieces and my parts
 O all of my all, incarnate
 and the all of your all envelops my significance
 My soul is merged with yours
 just as wine blends with pure water
 And if anything befalls you, the same befalls me
 then you are I in every state
 I am the one that adores and I am the adored
 we are two spirits occupying one body
 So if you see me you see him
 and if you see him then you see me
 His soul is mine and my soul is his
 who has seen two spirits incarnate in one body

[And also:]

Glory to Him who causes us to manifest in His image
 secret of the flash of the godhead kindled [in us]
 Then He appeared manifest in His creation
 in the form of the partaker of food and drink
 So that His creations could look upon Him
 like the moment when the two brows meet

And we should not forget to notice with al-Ḥallāj the remark and confirmation of the ‘resigned reason’, some of what he says:

There no longer remained between me and the Truth
 demonstration [*tabyān*]
 nor indication by verses or proof [*burhān*]
 None knows the Truth except he who knows it
 The created and mortal does not know the eternal
 The Creator is not indicated by his creation
 Have you ever encountered something beyond time?⁸⁴

* * *

And if we have perceived here something of an interpolation of ‘union’ (*al-ittiḥād*) and ‘incarnation’ (*al-ḥulūl*) in the theories of al-Junayd and al-Ḥallāj, in the subsequent phase we will witness differentiation between these two trends, where the Sufis came to delve deeply into Hermetism and its esoteric (*bāṭinī*) creed in order to connect their Sufi theories with Hermetic occult pseudosciences such as alchemy and talismans and the ‘[cryptic] knowledge of the secrets of letters’. Since space does not permit exposition of their views through their texts, it is sufficient to indicate some paragraphs of the central exposition by Ibn Khaldūn in his book *Shifā’ al-Sā’il* (*Remedy of the Questioner*) where he says:

There were a people among the later Sufis who endeavoured in revelatory knowledges, engaged in their practice, rendered them equal to other sciences and terminologies, on their basis they embarked on creating a special method of instruction and organizing existing things [*mawjūdāt*] through what they considered to be, according to specific arrangement, calling for conscience and

witnessing . . . and what associates their doctrinal *madhāhib* despite their differences and their various [Sufi] orders [*turuq*] are two perspectives: the first belongs to those who believe in the [divine] manifestation [theophanies] . . . and the most prominent of its adherents are Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Ibn Burjān, Ibn Qusay, al-Būnī, al-Ḥātimī and Ibn Shudkīn. Its outcome in the arrangement of the forms of existing things out of the necessity of truth is: that the existence of the truth is unity [*al-wahḍah*], and unity is the origin of uniqueness [*al-aḥadīyah*] and oneness [*al-wāḥidīyah*], and they both are expressions of unity [*al-wahḍah*] because if the latter is considered by means of disregarding abundance/multiplicity and denying considerations and approximations, then it will be considered uniqueness [*al-aḥadīyah*], and if it is considered by adopting abundance/multiplicity and the interminable realities, then it will be oneness [*al-wāḥidīyah*]. And the relation between uniqueness [*al-aḥadīyah*] and oneness [*al-wāḥidīyah*] is as the relation between manifest [*al-zāhir*] and esoteric/hidden [*al-bāṭin*] and between the manifest /evident and the unseen . . . then the first stages of revelation [theophanies] are the revelation of Allāh to Himself and its first manifestation is the manifestation of His divine exaltedness to Himself . . . and then this revelation encompasses perfection, for them, which is the elaboration of existence and manifestation . . . Perfection is divided into two: the perfection of conscience which is “the occurrence of abundance/multiplicity all at once and in one instant of witnessing the truth” and “nominal perfection” which is the separate occurrence of this abundance/multiplicity “in truths and considerations and revelations of existence” . . . for them this is the world of significances and the primordial existence [void] [*al-ḥaḍrah al-‘amā’īyah*] which is the Muhammadan truth, and some of the particularities of its multiplicity is the truth of the pen [*al-qalam*] and the slate [*al-lawḥ*] then the truth of nature, then the truth of the physical body of Adam in terms of existence and reality [. . .] then from the realities which are the fundamentals and the origins and from which divaricate other truths and revelations and manifestations of the unique self. These are particularly arranged in several types of arrangement until they conclude in the world of senses and what is witnessed/evident which is the world of rupture [lit., becoming unstitched] [*‘alam al-fatq*] . . . to them, and the first existence subsequent to the primordial existence [void] [*al-ḥaḍrah al-‘amā’īyah*] is the existence of particles [lit., as in particles of dust] [*al-ḥaḍrah al-‘amā’īyah*], called the station of ideals, followed by the throne [*al-‘arsh*] of Allah then the seat [*al-kursī*] then the celestial orbits according to their stations, then the world of elements, followed by the world of structures . . . and since all these are attributed to the truth and considering that the soul of the *barzakh* [limbo] is inclusive of its particulars and successive orders; then in the world of mended existence [*‘alam al-ratq*]

[the term *al-ratq*, connoting ‘mended’ or ‘sewn’ is being used here in apposition to the previous term: *al-fatq*]; hence if it is attributed to the universe and was revealed in its manifestations then it would be in the world of rupture [*‘alam al-fatq*].

This was the theory asserted by those who believed in [divine] manifestation as for the theory of those who believed in [divine] unicity (*al-tawḥīd*), Ibn Khaldūn determines it [i.e., the theory of oneness] as

it is more precious than the first in terms of conception and of reasonability, and the most prominent scholars of this trend were Ibn Dahhāq, Ibn Sabʿīn, al-Shashtarī and their companions and it consists briefly . . . that God [*al-bārī*] the Most Magnificent is the combination of what is seen and unseen and nothing else but that. And if this absolute truth were multiple, the inclusive presence which is the essence of all presences and the essence of every identity, then would fall into the delusion of time, space, divergence, occultation and manifestation; pains and pleasure; existence and non-existence. They say that all these, if true, are delusions due to the reports [*akhbār*] of the conscience and nothing extrinsic to it; thus, if delusions desist, then the whole world and whatever is in it will become one, this one is the Truth [Allāh], and the slave [i.e., the human being] is composed of two aspects, truth and falsity [i.e., a soul and a body, oneness and multiplicity] thus if falsity is brought down, which is necessary in delusions, then the truth will prevail.

And Ibn Khaldūn adds: ‘then from the properties emerged the knowledge of revelatory disclosure with the people of opinion [*ahl al-raʾy*] from nominal perfection, the manifestations of which are the spirits of celestial orbits and planets, and that the characteristics of letters and their secrets prevailed in the names and words [*akwān*] from primordial creation moving in its stages and expressing its secrets, thus transpired the knowledge of the secrets of letters . . . the different syntheses of al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī and others multiplied, among those who followed in their tracks. And in brief according to them, the divine souls act in the world of nature according to the best names [of Allāh] [*al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā*] and divine words, derived from the surrounding letters enveloped in the prevailing secrets of the worlds . . . al-Būnī said that one must not think that the secrets of the letters are attained by rational analogy [*al-qiyās al-ʿaqlī*], but such is achieved by way of witnessing evidence [*bi-ṭarīq al-mushāhadah*] and the divine granting of success.’ Then they correlated the behaviour of the physical bodies through alchemy and the behaviour of spiritual beings through

talismans, just as they also correlated the alchemical concoction and the spiritual concoction on the one hand, and on the other the elixir which transforms base metals into gold and the purification of the soul which transforms souls absorbed in the material into souls of sanctity and divinity. 'So they say: the subject of alchemy is a body within a body, because the elixir is physical, and base metal is similar to that. And they say that the subject of talismans is a soul inside a body, because it connects the supernal natures with the base natures. And the base natures are bodily and the supernal natures are spiritual.'⁸⁵ It should be noted that in his book *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* (*The Meccan Conquests*), Ibn 'Arabī addressed in detail the subject of 'alchemy of joy', that is, disciplining the soul and preparing it for its ascent towards 'the witnessing of Allāh' which is compared to the transformation that occurs in the transformation in base metals 'becoming' gold.

Moreover, here in the last stage of evolution of Sufism in Islam, we find ourselves coming full circle with the beginning . . . the Hermetic alchemy coupled with Sufism/Mysticism as it was identified by Jābīr bin Ḥayyān, the alchemist with Sufi inclinations, and Sufism coupled with alchemy as identified by Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī the Sufi alchemist. On the one hand, the 'Islamic' Sufism became enmeshed in Hermetism so deeply that it became entirely Hermetic itself; while on the other hand, just as this last stage of theoretical Sufism refers us back to its first beginnings, it also takes us back to Ismā'īli philosophy itself: the reader must have noticed this especially with those who asserted 'rerelation/manifestation(*al-tajallī*)'. Ibn Khaldūn noticed this relation so he wrote: 'then those late Sufis who speak of revelatory disclosure and what is beyond the senses [metaphysics] became deeply absorbed in it until a large number of them began believing in incarnation [*al-ḥulūl*] and union [*al-waḥdah*] . . . and their predecessors were closely connected to the later Ismā'īlis among the *rāfiḍah* who were also accused of believing in incarnation [*al-ḥulūl*] and the divinity of their Imams . . . thus each of the two groups partook of the doctrinal school [*madhab*] of the other, and their discourse was intermixed and their creeds came to resemble one another.'⁸⁶

* * *

These were the primary positions occupied by Hermetism in Arab-Islamic culture and the forms of its presence in it: thus, from the early *ghulāt* up to the *rāfiḍah* and Jahmīyah and from some trends of 'anthropomorphism'

to the earliest founders of theoretical Sufism, to the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity – which undoubtedly belong given their Hermetic character to Ismā‘īli philosophy at its apex among the esoteric Sufi trends of the *Bāṭinīyah* and illuminationist philosophy. Passing through the advocates of incarnation and the unity of the witnessed in the third century . . . to the other extensions which we will discuss later in another context such as the Oriental philosophy of Ibn Sīnā and the Sufism of al-Ghazālī, whether the one he expressed with a ‘Sunni’ Islamic discourse as in his book *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn (Revival of the Religious Sciences)* or that which shift the endeavour to Hermetic philosophical discourse such as the one he exhibits in his books *Ma‘ārij al-Quds (The Night Ascension of Jerusalem)* and *Mishkāt al-Anwār (The Niche of Lights)* as well as other writings of his. Add to the above wisdom of illumination of al-Suhrawardī of Aleppo which is affiliated with – in addition to other trends belonged – Hermes and Agathadeamon . . . all these positions occupied by Hermetism in Arab-Islamic culture – and we have only discussed the stages of the blossoming of Arab civilisation and have not mentioned the Era of Decline, the epoch when reason was resigned in Islam – indeed, these positions indicate to us the extent of the diversity and forms of the Hermetic presence in Arab thought and the extent of its perfusion in its various sectors and moreover the extent of the authority of this presence of the ‘resigned reason’ borne and consecrated by Arab-Islamic culture. And this is exactly what we intend to emphasise in this conclusion.

We previously defined our position in the introduction to this chapter in regard to three issues pertaining to our view of this subject and the method of dealing with it. We elected to do that in order to remove all ambiguity or misunderstandings from the outset. Now, we will summarise the basic conclusions which concern us.

We reaffirm once again that we are perfectly aware of the interference of the trends of the ancient heritage that were transmitted into Arab culture and their interwoven complexity. If we disregard temporarily and methodologically this interference, the trend which will stand out as the strongest is that transmitted by the Hellenistic ‘resigned reason’ to Arab culture which is Hermetic itself. We believe that the preceding pages completely vindicate this claim. Therefore, we are not giving precedence to one particular tree of the forest, but we are seeking what the forest constitutes essentially as one tree: it is ‘resigned reason’ running in the xylem of every one of the trees in this forest, dense with intertwined limbs and interwoven roots: the forest of the ancient heritage as enshrined by the Hellenistic Age.

This ‘resigned reason’ that occupied primary positions in Arab culture

as we have indicated, consecrated in this culture some kind of epistemological order, the hallmarks of which we highlighted in this chapter as well as the previous one, and which we will analyse epistemologically in the next chapter. Since this epistemological system had imposed itself in Arab-Islamic culture as an alternative to the order of the Arab *bayān*, rendering ‘self-reflexive knowledge’ or ‘[gnostic] illumination – ‘*irfān*’ the substitute for analogical reasoning (*al-qiyās*) upon which rested the demonstration of the Arab *bayān*, so we will call it hereafter the ‘illuminationist order’ (*al-niẓām al-‘irfānī*). Thus, the inconsistency we identified in the previous chapter between the ‘religious reasonable’ and the ‘irrational of reason’ in terms of content also underlies a similar inconsistency in terms of the epistemological system. Or let us say, this inconsistency at the level of content enshrined a similar inconsistency at the level of methodology.

In fact, it was interference between the two contents and the two orders, where one of them exhibited the aspect of the other, or where one of them was interpreted by means of the other. Ismā‘īli philosophy was not opposed against Islam, but it offered a particular interpretation which considered the rhetorical *bayānī* forms of the Qur’ān to be apparent [in meaning] behind which was a hidden [meaning] (*bāṭin*); however the ‘esoteric’ content presented by Ismā‘īli philosophy was unattainable without the very liberal and wide utilisation of Hermetic religious philosophy. The Ismā‘īli philosophers transferred the discourse of the Qur’ān – by way of esoteric (*bāṭinī*) interpretations – from one trope to another: from the understanding of the Arab *bayān*, upon which the pious ancestors (*al-salaf*) – to use Sunni terminology – depended, to the understanding of Hermetic philosophy which could never be achieved through mere contemplation of the Qur’ānic text, free from a prior knowledge of the Hermetic literature. This was precisely what we intended to elucidate when we made the connection between Ismā‘īli philosophy and Hermetic philosophy.

The same could be said about Sufism. Sufism as a mode of conduct and one of the manifestations of piety and worship does not concern us here. It would be entirely arbitrary to associate manifestations of piety and worship in Islam with the manifestations of piety and worship in another religion or another religious philosophy. Religion as far as it is religion is piety and worship, and every religion has its methods of practising these – both physically and spiritually. Islam has its own particular way which by and through it is distinguished from other religions. The thing that interests us in associating Islamic Sufism with the Hermetic mysticism is the theoretical aspect of it, meaning the allegiance of the Sufis of being their own perceptions and what some of them considered as ‘the truth’ versus ‘*al-sharī‘ah*’

(Islamic law), or ‘esoteric’ versus ‘manifest’. And we reiterate here that the opinions of the Sufis on the issues of oneness, manifestation, mortality, the oneness of evidences, the uniqueness of existence, and the reality of the soul and its origins and its fate . . . all these allegiances in these matters are not achievable with the mere heeding of the Qurʾānic script and the deep comprehension of it, but the Sufis utterances in these matters are basically derived from Hermetic literature, and they have included some verses from the Qurʾān and its rhetorical images that they have adapted directly or indirectly.

The *fuqahāʾ* and scholars of the *uṣūl* engaged in the *bayān* extracted from the study of the Qurʾān, as a linguistic text, an Arab rhetorical technique to understand it and derive rulings from it, and since this rhetorical jurisprudence of analogy does not lead to, and cannot lead to, the content presented by the esoteric streams such as the Ismāʿīli, Shīʿite and Sufi, described as ‘the truth’ behind the ‘*shariʿah*’, these jurists considered the esoteric interpretation, whether Shīʿite or Sufi, an intruder upon the Qurʾānic horizon, opposing and sometimes contradicting the manifestation of the holy text. For this reason was the feud between the *fuqahāʾ* and the Sufis. It is a conflict reflecting the contradiction between the two cognitive systems, one of them persisting on the basis of indication – namely, the connection between knowledge and the ‘excluded middle term’ which is the causal basis (*al-ʿillah*) for jurists, and the other is based on communion namely the direct communication and the ‘gnostic cognisance’.

Finally we must recall the essential contention that we previously indicated in this chapter and which we believe that the past pages have sufficiently confirmed. This contention determines that the Hermetic presence in the treatises of the *ghulāt* and *rāfiḍāh*, as well as in the alchemy of Jābir bin Ḥayyān and the mysticism of Abū Hāshim and al-Karkhī and Dhū al-Nūn and in Shīʿite thought in general made ‘resigned reason’ the first to have reached the Arabs from the ancient heritage, which was during the early Era of Codification, or even before. And on the other hand, the previous pages have actually confirmed that as much as Arab thought was evolving in the field of codification – namely as much as the Arab culture was building for itself some kind of roots and theoretical dimensions – so much was that ‘resigned reason’ rooting and fortifying its positions and broadening the scope of its influence.

This observation has two consequences. The first is that this ‘resigned reason’ – or let us say the Gnostic order – whether in the realm of Sufism or in that of the philosophy of illumination, or in the sphere of Ismāʿīli ideology, was not a reaction against the ‘austerity’ of the *fuqahāʾ*, nor was it the ‘tediousness’ of the inclination of reason of the theologians. No:

‘resigned reason’ had appeared – the Shī‘ite gnosis and the mystic revelation together – before the evolution of the laws by *fuqahā’* and the theories of theologians into what would necessitate a reaction in kind. Thus, the gnostic order of the *‘irfān fuqahā’* had imposed itself simultaneously with the ‘codification of opinion’ of *fuqahā’* and ‘the legitimisation of the legitimiser’ of theologians. And if we must perceive some kind of ‘reaction’ between the two systems, rhetorical *bayānī* and the illuminationist *‘irfānī*, the closest thing to the fact in our view, which is the second consequence, is that what we previously called ‘the Arab-Islamic rationalism’ was, in some of its aspects, a reaction against Manichean gnosticism and Shī‘ite illuminationism.

We have discussed the *bayān* and *‘irfān*, and so now it remains to describe the role of the Aristotelian logic and the Greek ‘universal reason’ in Arab-Islamic culture, the forms of its presence in it, and the positions it occupied within. This is the topic of the next chapter.

Notes

1. For our position towards the philological approach in Oriental Studies, see the introduction of our study about al-Fārābī and his religious and political philosophy in al-Jabri, Mohammed Abed, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah).

2. See introduction of *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*.

3. See the previous reference as well as the introduction of the second edition of the same book.

4. This study encompassed so far, the religious and political philosophy of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā’s Oriental philosophy in the Maghreb and al-Andalus, *Tadbīr al-Mutawahḥhid* by Ibn Bājjah, Ibn Rushd’s theory about the nexus of religion and philosophy and some aspects of Ibn Khaldūn’s thought; in addition to my aforementioned book. As to the emergence of philosophy in al-Mashriq and that of al-Kindī, the reader will find the main givens in the next chapter and which can establish our viewpoint in this regard.

5. Sheikh Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Rāziq was the first to call for chronicling Islamic philosophy on the basis of ‘unravelling the primordial units of Islamic reasoning’ and which requires ‘thorough understanding of the status and orientations of Arab thought during the emergence of Islam’. See ‘Abd al-Rāziq, Muṣṭafā, *Tambīd li-Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-Islāmīyah* (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta’līf wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1959), p. 101. Also, see a critical analysis for the consequences of such *Salafī* history of the Islamic philosophy in chapter one of my book: *al-Khiṭāb al-‘Arabī al-Mu‘āṣir* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah, 1982).

6. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah*, ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Wāfī edition, vol. 3, p. 997.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 998.

8. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Millal*, ed. by Muḥsin Mahdī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), p. 47.

9. See the introduction in my book: *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*.

10. Chapter Three.

11. It is astonishing to find a huge book such as that of Ḥussein Mrouweh entitled *al-Naz'āt al-Mādīyah fī al-Falsafah al-‘Arabīyah al-Islāmīyah* adopting an ‘approach’ of historical materialism; he dedicated 1,800 pages to study the philosophical thought in Islam up until Avicenna’s era, among which are 150 pages for the *Jāhili* period, without even tackling the scientific philosophical schools from which the philosophical legacy (whether material or immaterial) was transferred to Islam nor did he tackle the translation movement and its impetuses.

12. Chapter Three.

13. Louis Massignon, ‘inventaire de la littérature Hermétique Arabe’, in Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès*, appendix III, pp. 384–400.

14. In this regard, Massignon sees that the *naḥwī* school of Kūfah followed that of Pergamum which adopted such type of ‘empirical’ causality, whereas the Basran school of syntax (*al-naḥw*) followed that of Alexandria which depended on syllogism. Although all clues lead to the assumption that Kūfah was a Hermetic centre, we may not go in favour for what Massignon had concluded. Nevertheless, the exogenous factor had a trivial influence in the codification and metalanguage of Arabic language. The difference between the people of syllogism (Basrans) and the people of *samā‘* (Kūfans) in *naḥw* is only an aspect of a general phenomenon that we may find in the fields of *fiqh*, *kalām* and *tafsīr*, the phenomenon of division among Islamic and Arab scholars into *aṣḥāb al-riwāyah* (those of narration) and *aṣḥāb al-dirāyah* (those of knowledge). This phenomenon is attributed to certain factors in Arab culture that we addressed in earlier chapters.

15. Massignon, *ibid.*, pp. 388–90.

16. Some are sceptical about the existence of such character. And such a doubt has no reference to us whether the matter was connected to emir Khālīd bin Yazīd bin Mu‘āwīyah or someone else by the name of Khālīd . . . what is historically constant, is the dissemination of Hermetic sciences inside Arab culture in early times, among which was alchemy as clearly demonstrated above. The chain is connected between Jābir bin Ḥayyān and Hermetic texts via well-known translators.

17. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fibrīst* (Flugel edition), p. 242.

18. See an article by Goldziher Ignaz (1940) with the same title in: Badawī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *al-Turāth al-Yūnānī fī al-Ḥaḍārah al-Islāmīyah*.

19. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fibrīst*, p. 244.

20. Paul Kraus, *Mukhtār Rasā’il Jābir bin Ḥayyān (Kitāb al-Rāhib)* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1953), pp. 522–530. In fact, many Orientalists doubt the existence of Jābir bin Ḥayyān, they assume that the letters attributed to him were written in stages, the oldest of which cannot have been written before the century of the Hijrah. Whereas Arab sources confirm that he lived during the second century AH. The content of Ibn Ḥayyān’s letters and his reiteration that he was a pupil to Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (who died in 148), leave no doubt that it is impossible that he had lived after AH 200. And if these letters were deliberately or accidentally attributed to Ibn Ḥayyān, that would not rule out the existence of a person who lived by the time of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq and who had practised alchemy.

21. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fibrīst*, p. 355. Al-Rāzī died in AH 320, and since Jābir could not have lived after AH 200, as explained before, the connection between the two was not direct, rather it was via writings.

22. De Lacy, O’Leary, *Arabic Thought and its Place in History*, trans. Ismā‘īl al-Bīṭār (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1972), p. 71.

23. Paul, Kraus, *Mukhtār Rasā’il Jābir bin Ḥayyān*, p. 6.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

26. Ibid., pp. 542–543.
27. See my study concerning Ibn Sīnā and his Oriental study in my book *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*.
28. Ṣāʿid, *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Maḥmūdīyah, [n.d]), p. 71.
29. Ibid., p. 42.
30. Al-Masʿūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa al-Isbrāf* (Ṭabʿat Laydin, 1893), p. 162.
31. Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhabab*, vol. 4, p. 67.
32. Paul, Kraus, *Rasāʾil Falsafīyah li-Abī Bakr Muḥammad bin Zakarīyā al-Rāzī* (Tehran: al-Maktabah al-Murtaḍāwīyah, [n.d]), p. 187.
33. Ibid., p. 185.
34. Ibid., p. 101.
35. Ibid., pp. 17–18.
36. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, pp. 312 and 358.
37. Festugière, *La Révélation*, vol. 1, p. 355.
38. Massignon in Festugière, *La Révélation*, vol. 1, p. 387.
39. Corbin, Henry, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Naṣīr Mruwwah and Ḥasan Qubaysī (Beirut: Manshūrāt ʿUwaydāt, 1966), pp. 198–199.
40. Al-Ashʿarī, Abū al-Ḥasan, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa, 1969), vol. 1, p. 67.
41. In a Semitic language such as Arabic, the referent of the third-person masculine pronominal possessive suffix ‘his’ as attached to the noun ‘image’ or ‘form’ (*ṣūrah*) in the genitive case is ambiguous. Thus, in the phrase: ‘God created man in his image/form’ (*khalāqa allāh al-insān ʿalā ṣūratihī*) the pronominal referent of ‘his’ could be understood to be either ‘God’ or ‘man’, so an ‘Islamic’ reading is possible in the sense that ‘God created the human being in his form [i.e., the form of a human being, but not the ‘form’ of God].’ The Hermetic reading assumes the former as is generally common to Christianity. [Editor.]
42. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 72.
43. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 78.
44. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 123.
45. Al-Malṭī, Abū al-Ḥasan, *al-Tanbīh wa al-Rad ʿalā Ahl al-Ahwāʾ wa al-Bidaʿ*, ed. by Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Beirut: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1968), pp. 96–97. Also, see p. 93 in which al-Malṭī cites opinions of a faction he called *al-firqah al-rūḥīyah* (the spiritual faction), and they are utterly Hermetic.
46. Al-Shaybī, Kāmil Muṣṭafāʾ, *al-Ṣilah bayn al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Tashayyūʿ* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1969), pp. 269–70.
47. Reynold, Nicholson, *In Islamic Mysticism*, trans. by Abū al-ʿUlā ʿAfīfī (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʿlīf wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1956), p. 4.
48. Ibid., p. 7.
49. Al-Qifṭī, *Akbbār al-ʿUlamāʾ bi-Akbbār al-Ḥukamāʾ*, Mukhtaṣar al-Zawzani (Leipzig, 1903), p. 185.
50. Metz, Adam, *Islamic Civilisation in the Fourth Century of the Hegira*, trans. by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Hādī Abū Rīdah (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʿlīf wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1957), vol. 2, pp. 17–18.
51. Orientalist scholars and their pupils tended to adopt the distinction established by Goldziher between *marḥalat al-zuhd* (the stage of asceticism) and *marḥalat al-taṣawwuf* (the stage of mysticism) in the history of Islamic mysticism. We did not see any justification for such a distinction since they both belong to ancient tradition; indeed, Islam was never established on the concept of asceticism in living, rather, it adopted the orientation of realistic strife, since its inception, directed towards conquering the ancient world and establishing a civilisation and a state of its own. And if there

were *ṣaḥābah* who were known for their piety and worshipfulness, it was not an asceticism in the literal meaning of the expression, in fact, it was just an aspect of devoutness. In any case, such piety and worshipfulness would never have established what came to be known as *taṣawwuf*, consequently, it is not regarded as a foundational 'stage' for it.

52. We have previously demarcated in chapter three that the beginning of the Era of Codification was in the middle of the second century of the *hijrah*. Evidently, from what we proved above, that Hermetic theses of *ghulāt* and *rawāfiḍ* were widely spread before that history, this in fact supports our assumption that codification of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* was just a reaction against ideologies and thoughts of the ancient traditions and which posed a menace to Islam that by that time had nothing recorded yet except the Qur'an.

53. *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir and Dār Beirut, 1957), vol. 4, pp. 9–12.

54. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 51.

55. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 52.

56. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 179.

57. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 402.

58. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 24.

59. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 456.

60. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 213–214.

61. Al-Kirmānī, al-Dā'irah al-Ḥamīd al-Dīn, *Rāḥat al-'Aql*, ed. by Muṣṭafā Ghālib (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1957), p. 135.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 141–144.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 157–186.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 207–209.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 221–223.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 302.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 451.

73. In Ismā'īlism, the chain starts with *al-nāṭiq* (the Speaker) as we have seen earlier. However, the *naṭīq* is commissioned to receive the *tanzīl* (revelation) or *al-kitāb* (the Book); and as to *ta'wīl* (exegesis) of the book, that is, to derive its inner meaning, this is a task entrusted to *al-waṣī* (the designated representative) who would know the secret meaning of whatever the *naṭīq* receives.

74. Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭinīyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Kuwait: Mu'asasat Dār al-Kutub al-Thaqāfīyah), p. 17.

75. We only addressed the Ismā'īlīs here without talking about Twelver Shī'ites who although never adopting Ismā'īlī philosophy, converge i.e., with Ismā'īlism in terms of the question of knowledge. See details of their viewpoints in Henry, Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*.

76. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, [n.d.]), p. 19.

77. 'Afīfī, Abū al-'Ulā, *al-Taṣawwuf, al-Thawrah al-Rūḥīyah fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Sha'b, [n.d.]), p. 159.

78. Al-Junayd, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, cited by 'Afīfī in the same source, p. 161.

79. 'Rasā'il al-Junayd fī al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Akhlāq al-Dīnīyah', cited in Sharaf,

Muḥammad Jalāl, *Dirāsāt fī al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah, 1980), pp. 317–318.

80. The text of the *āyah*, which is called *āyat al-mīthāq*, is (And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], “Am I not your Lord? they said, “Yes, we bear witness.” [This] – lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, “Indeed, we were of this unaware.”) (Qurʾān: *surat al-Aʿrāf*, (7:172). And this is the *āyah* upon which al-Junayd established his Hermetic theory about *al-nafs* (psyche).

81. Al-Junayd, *Kitāb al-Mīthāq*, cited by ʿAlī Ḥarb in ʿal-taṣawwuf al-Islāmī: hal huwa nafiy li-l-ʿaql am ʿajz ʿan al-taḥqīqʿ, *Majallat al-Fikr al-ʿArabī*, p. 97, June 1980. Moreover, al-Junayd’s opinions remind us of Numenius’s idea which states that the transcendental god is the one who sowed the seeds of human spirits . . .) as we have seen earlier.

82. Ḥarb, *ibid.*, p. 98. And ʿAfīfī, *ibid.*, pp. 162 ff.

83. Al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al-Ṭawwāsīn*, mentioned by Aḥmad Amīn Zahr al-Dīn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1962), vol. 2, p. 78.

84. See *Dīwān al-Ḥallāj*, ed. Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī, arranged in alphabetical order (Baghdad: Matābiʿ al-Maʿarif, 1974). For the same author also see *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥallāj* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Nahḍah, 1974). And we shall address al-Ghazālī the sheikh of Sufis (the Sunnis) in the subsequent chapter.

85. Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifāʾ al-Sāʾil li-Tabdhīb al-Masāʾil*, ed. by Reverend Ignatius ʿAbduh Khalīfah al-Yasūʿī (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Kātholīkīyah, 1959), pp. 51–54.

86. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, p. 1073.

CHAPTER 10

The Introduction of Reason into Islam

When we were analysing the form of the ancient heritage in Arab-Islamic culture, as presented by al-Shahristānī in his heresiography *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (*The Book of Sects and Creeds*),¹ the distinction he made drew our attention. This conscious distinction in ‘Greek’ philosophical schools is between the school of thought of those he called ‘the ancient ones’ (*al-qudamāʾ*) among the sages of wisdom, that is, the ‘Seven Sages’, and the schools of thought he termed ‘the later ones’ (*al-mutaʾakhirīn*), that is the Peripatetics, the Stoics and Aristotelians. We previously indicated that this distinction is of particular importance to our subject, despite what it entails of confusion, interpolation and historical inversion: al-Shahristānī actually attributed later schools to the ancient ones (*al-qudamāʾ*) including the schools of Neo-Platonism, Neo-Pythagoreanism and Hermetic religious philosophy, just as he classed Aristotle – who is, of course, more ancient than these – as coming after them, thus completely inverting the true historical order. As we have clarified, responsibility for this inversion does not fall on al-Shahristānī or other historians among Islamic scholars who have written histories of doctrinal schools, sects and creeds, this was, rather, a legacy inherited from the ‘past’, and to be more specific, from the Hellenistic era – the epoch of ‘resigned reason’ when people abandoned Aristotle and his logic and resorted to Plato – comprehending him through Pythagoras, whom they in turn comprehended through Oriental ‘prophetic’ wisdom.

However we may acquit al-Shahristānī and his contemporaries of this

responsibility, from the historical point we must not be precluded from seeing another historical reality which is that this historical inversion which they practised theoretically in the pre-Islamic context reflects an *actual* historical situation in the historical context of philosophy in Islam. Indeed, the first thing which Arab-Islamic thought came to know of 'Greek' philosophy was, in fact, those doctrines which al-Shahristānī attributed to those he called 'the ancients': that is, the Neo-Platonic and the Neo-Pythagorean schools of thought and Hermetic religious philosophy. As for Aristotle, Arab-Islamic thought did not come to know him until a later stage. In other words, the Aristotelian presence in Arab-Islamic culture came *later*, at least a century *after* the Hermetic presence (by which we mean the 'scholastic' dimension of the Hermetism which was transmitted via translation, given that the 'common' Hermeticism [of the masses] was present in Arab thought long before that as we have previously indicated).

This delayed presence of Aristotelianism in Arab-Islamic culture was assessed by al-Shahristānī and 'elucidated' – in the scope of the historical inversion coming from him – as follows, when he says: 'Then, philosophers differed in ways too many to be counted about hypothetical, conceptual wisdom and the later ones among them differed with the first in regard to most questions; the questions of the first ones were restricted to natures and divine attributes and that is theological discourse [*al-kalām*] on God [*al-bārī*] the Most Exalted and on the world, then they added to that mathematics . . . after them Aristotle, the wise, discussed about the science of logic.²² If we put matters in their actual historical context, we must assert – according to the content of the discourse of al-Shahristānī – that Neo-Platonism and the Neo-Pythagorean school of thought as well the partisans of the Hermetic literature completely abandoned logic, the logic of Aristotle, and were only interested in divine attributes and natures and geometry and trigonometry (particularly the Pythagorean), all this in the context of the 'theological discourse on God the Most Exalted' which constituted the essence of Hermeticism and the Oriental strain of Neo-Platonism. Thus, the predictable outcome would be the absence of Aristotelian *logic* in particular, and Aristotelian philosophy in general, in Arab-Islamic culture during the early stages of dealing with the ancient heritage, in terms of philosophy and knowledge.

Was this actually the situation, and – if so – why?

Undoubtedly, asserting that the presence of Aristotelian logic in Arab-Islamic culture came a century later than the presence of other categories of the ancient heritage within one and the same culture will upset the conventional conceptions of many scholars 'conversant' with the history

of Arab-Islamic culture which are prevailing today, which determines – and I have no idea based on what – ‘that the logic of Aristotle was the first that Muslims came to know of the ancient knowledges’. However, if we assert that this logic, *Aristotelian* logic in particular, *cannot* be confirmed to have been present in Arab-Islamic culture *in toto* until the fourth century AH, namely two centuries *after* the initiation of translation and codification, undoubtedly, many contemporary ‘historians’ of ancient Arab-Islamic thought will consider this assertion to be ‘ignorant’ or ‘far-fetched’.

Nevertheless, we are compelled, before the historical facts, to weather the critical storm, hoping to help calm it down on its own, gradually, through the steps we will take in this chapter and the next.

We will begin with the first step, and ask: when, how and why the Aristotelian presence began to appear in Arab-Islamic culture.

Al-Ma'mūn's Dream

Ibn al-Nadīm wrote in the *Fihrist* (*The Index*) under the heading ‘mentioning the reason behind the multiplicity of books in philosophy and other among the ancient knowledges in these countries: ‘One of the reasons for this is that the caliph al-Ma'mūn saw in his dream a white man, a red beard, a broad forehead and conjoined eyebrows, who was bald-headed, with light coloured eyes and pleasing of countenance, sitting on the edge of his bed, of whom al-Ma'mūn said: it was as though I were before him and he was possessed of an aura of veneration. I asked: “Who are you?” He replied: “I am Aristotle.” I was pleased and said: “O sage I would like to enquire of you.” He responded: “Ask.” I enquired: “What is good?” He replied: “What is good according to reason (*fī al-ʿaql*)”. I said: “Then what?” He said: “What is good according to law.” I persisted: “Then what?” He responded: “What is good according to the masses (*al-jumhūr*).” I asked: “Then what?” He said: “There is nothing thereafter.” . . . and this dream was the most certain reason for producing books. Thus, there was correspondence between al-Ma'mūn and the ruler of Rome, and al-Ma'mūn sought his assistance, writing to the king of Rome and asking him permission to preserve what he had with him of select ancient knowledge accumulated and kept in the land of Rome, and he agreed after having initially abstained.³

Is this a mythical legend? Perhaps, but in the best of cases it is only just a dream!

So be it. Yet, what is significant for our subject is not whether this

dream actually occurred for al-Ma'mūn or whether he acted accordingly to it or not, because we know, and all those who have some kind of experience in life know, that the enormity of the work of al-Ma'mūn for which he had employed state authority and its full potential in the service of acquiring ancient books and translating them and towards which purpose he spent generously, could not have been driven by merely a dream, even this dream, if it truly occurred, was actually the *result* of the endeavour of al-Ma'mūn in this work and *not* its cause. Although we know this very well, we must still give the 'tale' of Ibn al-Nadīm the attention it deserves: the reason is because we are here before a text, namely a historical document transmitting to us the justification accorded to that vast process that transpired during the rule of al-Ma'mūn – the process of translation, and the translation of the writings of Aristotle specifically. Ibn al-Nadīm wrote this text in AH 377 – after the death of al-Ma'mūn by about a century and a half. And whether the tale of this 'dream' was spun during the days of al-Ma'mūn or after his death, the person who formulated it effectively succeeded in making it bear the significance of the dream and its indications so we will try to read it and 'interpret' it, but in the light of real historical givens.

We notice first that the assertion that al-Ma'mūn, the caliph of the Muslims, saw Aristotle in his dream carries a particular value within the epistemological field prevalent at that time. We have indicated in Chapter Eight of this book how knowledge was sought in Hermetic literature, neither from sense perception nor from reason, but from an unseen metaphysical power cast into the soul of the human being (or into his heart or his 'mind' (*ru'*) according to the well-known Islamic expression) during his sleep or one of his moments of wakefulness. Islamic thought knew at an early stage this kind of 'knowledge' as 'the true vision' (*al-ru'yā al-ṣādiqah*). Undoubtedly, whoever spun the tale of this dream had intentionally utilised in his description of Aristotle a *bayānī* 'rhetorical' formulation recalling the famous *ḥadīth* which related the way Gabriel, the angel of revelation, had been represented in human form then how he entered amongst the Prophet and his companions, asking questions of him with the Prophet answering him, so that after he had finished asking questions and gone, the Prophet would say to the Muslims present: 'This is Gabriel, he came to teach you your religion.' And the goal behind reconfiguring this image in the 'dream' of al-Ma'mūn is clear: it is to attribute sufficient religious legitimacy to what al-Ma'mūn endeavoured to do in terms of enlisting the state in the service of acquiring the books of the ancients and translating them.

But then what?

The dream presents Caliph al-Ma'mūn as a pupil asking 'the master', ('the master' in the Hermetic sense of the word) and the teacher is *Aristotle*. Yet, why Aristotle in particular? The question we pose here in the scope of analysing 'the dream' imposes itself, even more insistently, in the context of historical reality. Indeed, what is historically confirmed is that al-Ma'mūn brought ancient books, and at the forefront of these were the books of Aristotle. He brought them from the 'countries of Rome' and he ordered that they be translated and spent lavishly for this purpose. So, what was it that drove al-Ma'mūn to act in such a way? The dream provides the answer in its own way, by way of a dream. And that is through the dialogue that 'took place' between al-Ma'mūn and Aristotle, which is a dialogue focused on one question: 'What is *good*?' The answer comes to reveal what is necessary: what is required is not to identify the 'good' but to determine the means of realising it and therefore to identify the means of (attaining) knowledge. And 'Aristotle' – I mean the creator of the dream who might be al-Ma'mūn himself – had delimited these as three: reason, then the law, then the 'masses' which connotes within the epistemological field wherein the text moves: 'consensus' (*al-ijmā'*). And since 'the law' (*al-shar'*) includes the Book (Qur'ān) and the *sunnah*, these sources of knowledge become 'the fundamental sources' (*al-uṣūl*) of the creed as in Islamic *sharī'ah*. As for the suggestion within the context of the dream of the connection of the issue of 'the good' with the cognition of reason, in conformity with the theory of the Mu'tazilah on this topic, it is only a means of disguising and concealing the true purpose.

The fact is that the dream does not seek to promote the theory of the Mu'tazilah on what is rationally good and what is rationally reprehensible as might seem apparent from the dream, but rather it intends to establish something completely different, and the proof for that is al-Ma'mūn's continued posing of the question until 'Aristotle' finally answers decisively: 'There is nothing then.' What the dream seeks to establish is that there is no other source for knowledge other than the sources mentioned. Thus, it is clear that the purpose of the dream is not what it confirms, as reason and the law and consensus were already established fundamental sources of knowledge, but the real objective of it is in what it *denies*. And that which thing the dream denies by utilising this powerful expression – *there is nothing then* – is nothing other than gnosticism and illuminationism (*al-irfān*). Therefore, the translation movement initiated by al-Ma'mūn and in the service of which he had enlisted the capabilities of his state, and which was primarily oriented towards Aristotle, was intended

to resist the Manichean gnosticism and Shīʿite illuminationism – namely the source of knowledge pretended by and distinguishing the movements opposing the ʿAbbāsids. Thus, the translation movement, especially the one oriented towards Aristotle, was a part – a key and essential part – of a new strategy employed by al-Maʿmūn to resist the epistemological and ideological base principles of his political opponents. We shall now shed some light on this new strategy, on its background and its expansion.

We have elucidated in a previous chapter (Chapter Seven) how seriously Manicheanism threatened the caliphal state and we have highlighted how the ʿAbbāsids endeavoured, and the caliph al-Mahdī in particular, to suppress the Manichean movement by all means. The caliph al-Mahdī had initiated the *ʿdiwān al-zanādiqah* (roster of heretics) to track and pursue them, and the term *ʿal-zanādiqah* connoted at that time the Manicheans specifically, and the campaign against them reached a climax in AH 166 when al-Mahdī punished them in exemplary fashion.

In addition to this repulsion by the sword, there was also a repulsion by ‘the pen’. Indeed, the reaction to Manicheanism had begun, as is well known, as soon as its adherents had begun to appear by the end of the Umayyad era. Wāṣil bin ʿAṭāʾ, founder of the Muʿtazilite sect and deceased in AH 131 (the year of the fall of the Umayyad state), had composed a treatise on *ʿAl-Radd ʿalā al-Zanādiqah* (*Response to the Heretics*), just as other *mutakallimūn* and *fuqahāʾ* engaged in responding and confronting them. However, these responses were merely *individual* initiatives and did not transform into a strategy of the state until the rise of the ʿAbbāsīd state. Yet, the Manicheans were active in spreading their doctrine and they promoted it during the circumstances of the revolution that overthrew the Umayyad state. The ʿAbbāsīds found themselves facing an active movement, working both secretly and openly, and distributing its books and tracts in large enough quantities to enable it to impose itself on the cultural scene and aspire to control it. Therefore, it was only natural that the ʿAbbāsīds should respond in a strong and organised fashion in the same arena. It was from this standpoint that the vast operation driven by the ʿAbbāsīd state, to which contributed all the outlying Islamic garrisons and territories, the process of ‘codifying knowledge and classifying it’ derived its importance *vis-à-vis* Arab-Islamic culture as we indicated in Chapter Three. The ‘codification of knowledge’ (namely, collecting *ḥadīth* traditions in particular) could be viewed from this standpoint as a reaction aimed at collecting the Arab-Islamic heritage and systemising it in order to resist Manicheanism and all streams assailing Islam and opposing its state, including the Shīʿah.

It seems that the term ‘heretics’ which initially connoted Manicheans alone, was expanded to encompass – with the passing of days and the intensification of the battles being waged in the field of culture – every person whose creed was suspect, even every opponent who did not exhibit piety or righteousness. Thus, while we find the caliph al-Mahdī saying in his will to his son ‘O my son, if this happens to you, dispose of this group, as it is a sect calling people to an apparent good such as avoiding immoral obscenity, and promoting asceticism in the life of the world and acting for the sake of the afterlife; but, then it departs from this, prohibits meat and touching purifying water, leaving the masses to embarrassment and enjoyment, then it calls for the worship of *two*, one of which is light and the other which is darkness.’ While we find al-Mahdī explicitly writing that Manicheans are ‘partisans of the two [deities: *aṣḥāb al-ithnayn*]’, sources indicate the expansion of the meaning of ‘heresy’ to include the political opponents of the ‘Abbāsīd state regardless of their orientation, and this development occurred after the death of al-Mahdī (AH 169), ‘and therefore a number of persons among the partisans of other groups were accused of heresy, and this terminology came to embrace also some of *ahl al-dhimmah* (protected peoples), especially the Christians [*al-naṣārā*] as well as some profligate, irreverent and witty persons just as it also included the sceptics, freethinkers, and the *ahl al-kalām* [i.e., the practitioners of dialectical theology].⁴ It seems that al-Maʾmūn (who ruled as caliph between AH 198 and 218) well known for his rational orientation, had realised the serious consequences that would follow from any physical liquidation of the ‘heretics’ in the broad sense of the word, and therefore ‘he adopted the method of rational debate and intellectual persuasion’.⁵ He might have realised that political violence only increases the faith and fervent commitment of people in their creeds, particularly given that the Manicheans had a long tradition of clandestine organisation and dissemination of propaganda in an atmosphere of secrecy and obfuscation. Furthermore, given that the epistemological basis depended upon by the Manicheans was gnosticism, which resembles revelation, that which connects the followers with ‘the master’ is coming into contact with the truth from above and not as an idea or school of doctrine. Thus of a necessity, there had to be an orientation towards *thinking* as the weapon opposing gnosticism, and towards (reasoned) debate and logic. It is therefore that the dream of al-Maʾmūn in this regard was not for the sake of Aristotle himself, but for the sake of confronting Mani and his followers.

However, the real threat for the ‘Abbāsīd state during the rule of al-Maʾmūn did not come from Manichean gnosticism alone, but also Shīʿite

‘illuminationism’ and the emergence of the esoterism of the ‘Bāṭinīyah’ were among the strongest factors driving al-Ma’mūn to resort to Aristotle in the context of an overall strategy purposing to ensconce reason – *universal* reason (*al-‘aql al-kawnī*) – as arbiter in the ideological and religious disputes. The fact is that the conflict between the ‘Abbāsids and the ‘Alawites (i.e., the Shī‘ah) – which grew immense after the collapse of the alliance between them as a result of the monopoly of *banī* ‘Abbās over the throne, immediately subsequent to the success of their joint revolution against the Umayyads – was not only a political and military conflict but was also, perhaps to an even greater and more enduring degree, an ideological struggle. Of course, ideology was, as is always the case, in the service of politics and not vice versa.

The Shī‘ites have based their religious-political doctrinal *madhab* on the basis of ‘*al-waṣīyah* – the designation [of ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib by the Prophet as his successor]’ and ‘the infallibility [*‘iṣmah*] of the Imam’ and consequently on ‘Prophetic hereditary succession’ (*wirāth al-nubuwwah*) which entails directly the entitlement of ‘the inheritance of caliphal succession’ (that is, *rule*). As we observed in the previous chapter, the Shī‘ah found in Hermeticism an inexhaustible wellspring from which they derived their ‘prophetic’ philosophy, and therefore they were ‘the first to be Hermetised in Islam’ according to the terms employed by Massignon. And the Hermetisation of Shī‘ites had begun at an early time (the early second century of the Hijrah, at the end of the Umayyad era) and particularly with the *ghulāt*,⁶ who were in concert with Hermetic ideas across a wide range, including the concept of ‘the master’ (which corresponds here to the idea of the designee and the imam) as well as the concepts of purification (*al-taḥīr*), illumination (*al-‘irfān*) and the idea of the supreme transcendent God itself. And if some of the *ghulāt* employed words intimating ‘anthropomorphism’ in their theological discourse on God, it was only with the intention of transferring divinity or some of its attributes to the ‘Imam’ Massignon says in this regard: ‘Contrary to the allegations in the books of Sunni sects, there has been no Shī‘ite sect of the *ghulāt* claiming that one of these three prototypes⁷ could be God in his essence; for all the *ghulāt*, God could not be known in his essence as he transcends all description and perception, but rather the matter here is one of association, and the type of this association varies in accordance with the prototype preferred by the sect.’⁸ It is clear that the intention behind determining this association, the association of the Imam with some form of divinity, is a determination and a confirmation of his continuous communication with God and receiving ‘knowledge’ from Him. Thus, the anthropomorphism

affirmed by al-Mughīrah bin Sa‘īd al-Jabalī’ for instance, a member of the *ghulāt* for whom we emphasised the Hermetic character of his treatises (in the previous chapter) was not anthropomorphism in the literal sense of the word, but as a means for clarification and confirmation of the continuity of revelation in the persons of the imamate. ‘Al-Mughīrah was an anthropomorphist among the *ghulāt*, but he adopted anthropomorphism towards a clear objective, and that was by considering that God has organs according to the same number of letters in the alphabet and in the same form, as if he were intending to assert that revelation is a *descent* of God *himself* unto the Prophet and the Imam, where every word he receives is nothing other than an *incarnation* [*ḥulūl*] which persists as long as the revelation continues.’⁹

In spite of the fact that the great Shī‘ite Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. AH 148) used to express his discomfort about the way the *ghulāt* spoke of the Imams, and in spite of his opposition to armed revolution, and his peace with the ‘Abbāsids and the Sunnis, all sources confirm somehow that his overall strategy intended ‘cultural control’ initially, leading subsequently to political control. In reality, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq was the Shī‘ite scholar who endeavoured more than others to systematise Shī‘ite doctrine and allay ‘doubts’ about it. Thus, he did not hesitate to expel Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, one of his disciples and a senior propagandist, as well as absolve himself of any affiliation with him when Abū al-Khaṭṭāb exhibited extremism in his regard and began attributing to al-Ṣādiq prescient ‘knowledge of the unseen’ and claiming that an incarnation of God persisted in him. And if Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq condemned this extremism, he did not deny himself nor other Shī‘ite Imams, ‘Prophetic hereditary succession’, namely a monopoly over comprehending the truth of the religion and ‘the intrinsic, hidden nature’ (*bāṭin*) i.e., of the Qur’ān. Moreover, he did not touch Shī‘ite ‘illuminationism’ but instead he affirmed it and attributed some type of Islamic religious legitimacy to it. He used to ‘contend that the Imams had a supernal spiritual station approaching that of prophecy, except that they were not prophets, nor was it lawful for them to marry as many women as the Prophet had, but aside from these considerations, they were in the prophetic station. Given that, it is admissible for them to speak on behalf of the Prophet, and it is as if their teachings are those of the Prophet himself . . .’ but even al-Kulaynī – who mentions this – reports for us that ‘the imamate is one link in the chain of prophecy throughout the world’ attributing this saying to the Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq himself.¹⁰ In the same sense, Henry Corban, an expert in Shī‘ite thought, says: ‘All people in Islam assert that the cycle of prophecy had been concluded with the Seal

of the Prophets [i.e., Muḥammad], whereas for the Shī‘ah, there is another cycle which is the cycle of trusteeship [*wilāyah*] . . . and in fact . . . what was attributed, indeed, for the Shī‘ite authors is only *legislative* prophecy; as for prophecy in its strict sense connoting the spiritual state of those who were called, in what was before Islam, *prophets* and whom we now call *awilyā’* [trustees], the name alone has changed and as for the other thing it remains.¹¹ Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq was of this view as were all other Shī‘ite Imams, except that he thought it necessary to adhere to the principle of ‘dissimulation [*al-taqīyyah*]’ in this matter which he considered one of the secrets that ought not to be declared openly, especially given that the Shī‘ah were under the scrutiny of their ‘Abbāsīd opponents and their Sunni rivals. Therefore, he did not hesitate to sacrifice one of the leaders of his movement, as we have mentioned, in order to save the whole movement. In this regard, it had been cited that he once said: ‘By God if I were able to sacrifice two traits of the Shī‘ah by some of “the flesh of my arm” [these would be] irascibility and the inability to conceal [secrets].’ Additionally, he also is reported to have said: ‘It is not a possibility for us to believe or accept any thing, just as we are unable to keep a secret and conceal it from other than its people.’¹²

By means of this ‘appeasement’ strategy, the strategy of cultural control and psychological preponderance through alleging the possession of ‘the secret of prophecy’ and the adornment of appellations and the raising of slogans, the ‘Abbāsīds attempted to resist it with the same weapons, so they strove to oppose every ‘Alawite idea with another ‘Abbāsīd one: thus, al-Manṣūr opposed the idea of the ‘Alawite ‘Mahdī’ with the concept of ‘the ‘Abbāsīd mahdī,’ and he also opposed the claims of the ‘Alawites to possess the inherited secret knowledge of the Prophet. He opposed that by alleging that the ‘Abbāsīds had their own inherited secret knowledge. In this context, he wrote his will to his son al-Mahdī: ‘Look at this *saft* [container] and preserve it as it comprises the knowledge of your forefathers, what had existed in the past and what will exist until the day of the doomsday.’¹³ And the *saft* is a container in which a woman collects her objects of ornament, and it reminds us of the *jafr* that Abu al-Khaṭṭāb and his supporters claim that Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq had posited with them, consisting of a kind of leather hide or a container of leather which they say included writings such as prescient knowledge of the unseen and the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) *tafsīr* of the Qur‘ān, as well as all that pertained to the future in the form of symbols. It was not only this, but the competition over appellations, slogans and claims to possess secrets, between the ‘Abbāsīds and the ‘Alawites, extended to

the arena of extremism itself. Thus, just as there were some Shī'ite extremists claiming the incarnation of God in their Imams, there were amongst the supporters of the 'Abbāsids extremists in their own right, such as the Rawāndite sect whose followers had supported the right (to rule) of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs to the extent of elevating them to the level of divinity, in other words, the 'Abbāsids desired to make the Rawāndīyah a front for their extreme glorification and to propagandise for them in apposition to the other extremist sects supporting their opponents and especially the 'Alawites. In addition to that, ultimately, the 'Abbāsids opposed the Shī'ite concept on '*al-waṣīyah* – designation [of a successor]' as 'they claimed that the Prophet had specified his uncle 'Abbās bin 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib to succeed him'.¹⁴

However, Shī'ite cultural strategy did not stop at the limits of slogans and appellations to co-opt the public, but it was oriented with Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, as we have indicated, towards systemising the doctrine of the *madhab* and framing its suppositions in an ordered array. Here we chance upon a strong personality who played a major and crucial role in this matter Hishām bin al-Ḥakam described by Ibn al-Nadīm as being 'one of the companions of Abū 'Abdullah Ja'far bin Muḥammad (al-Ṣādiq), may Allāh be pleased with him, one of the Shī'ite *mutakallimūn* who excelled in theological discourse on the imamate and refined the doctrine of the *madhab* as well as theory, and he was highly skilled in the art of *al-kalām* . . . and he died a while after the catastrophe of the Barmakids, and before the caliphate of al-Ma'mūn.' Ibn al-Nadīm mentions many of his books, of which some are on the Imamate, and some are in response to heretics and those who asserted two deities; others are on *al-tawḥīd* and another on the response to the proponents of archetypes innate natures as well as a book in the style of Aristotle on oneness in addition to other books – some on concoction and equilibrium, two branches of alchemy.¹⁵ As for the source from which Hishām bin al-Ḥakam used to draw, it is the Hermetic literature itself. In fact, if Shī'ite thought had been Hermetised partially with the early *ghulāt* it has Hermetised *systematically* with Hishām bin al-Ḥakam. This first Shī'ite 'philosopher' spent his early years in Kūfah – home of Hermeticism in Iraq – and followed the views of Jahm bin Ṣafwān in denying the [divine] attributes, so he promoted the idea of the Hermetic transcendent supreme God. As for the anthropomorphism attributed to him, it should be comprehended in the light of what we have previously pointed out: that the *ghulāt* intended through attributing anthropomorphic characteristics to God, to elevate their Imams to the level that would permit them to share in knowledge of divinity. Many texts confirm

the phenomenon in this sense. Thus, Abū Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī says that what Hishām bin al-Ḥakam desires to imply by the phrase ‘God is physical’ [lit., is a body (*jism*)]’ is that ‘he exists, he is a thing and he is self-subsisting’.¹⁶ As for Ibn Ḥazm, he lumps together Jahm bin Ṣafwān, Hishām bin al-Ḥakam and Muḥammad bin ‘Abdullah bin Masarrah al-Bātinī al-Andalusī and attributes to all of them the assertion that ‘the knowledge of God the Most Exalted is other than God the Most Exalted and it is incidental and created [*muḥdath wa makhlūq*].’¹⁷ The distinction between God and ‘the knowledge of God’ in this form corresponds entirely with the Hermetic distinction between the supreme transcendent God unknown to the world because he is transcendent above all change and deficiency, and between God the Maker and the First Intelligence which the Hermetic texts say is the supreme transcendent God it is rendered the form/image of the world, and it is in this sense a ‘created knowledge’ [*ilm makhlūq*]. We read this idea clearly with Ibn Taymīyah who says that Hishām bin al-Ḥakam and Jahm bin Ṣafwān and all their followers perceive that ‘there is no relation with the Lord in knowledge or power or speech or will or mercy or satisfaction or anger or any of these qualities, rather whatever may be described by such is created and distinct and separate from him’.¹⁸

In addition to this systematic categorisation at the level of thought, and with Hishām bin al-Ḥakam, the Shī‘ite movement had developed at the level of a secret partisan order during the rule of al-Ma‘mūn, and the matter is basically related to the development of the rhetorical division and its transformation to the ‘Ismā‘īli sect’, and consequently the appearance of the esoteric movement: Abū Khaṭṭāb had remained adhering to Ismā‘īl bin Ja‘far (even after he had been denied by this latter), and he was the link between him and the *ghulāt*, serving him as his disciple or even in what was similar to the relation between a ‘spiritual father’ to his ‘son’. Besides Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, there was also Maymūn al-Qaddāḥ, who was in charge of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq and who was also in the service of Ismā‘īl. So when this latter died during the lifetime of his father Ja‘far and then Ja‘far himself died afterwards, Maymūn formed a new sect claiming that Ismā‘īl was the Mahdī; then, when Muḥammad had grown old, the son of this latter diverted this claim to him. When Maymūn died, his son ‘Abdullah promoted the movement to the end . . . until the rise of the Fāṭimid state. It should be noted here that Maymūn al-Qaddāḥ and his son ‘Abdullah were among Abū al-Khaṭṭāb’s followers. Therefore, the discursive movement developed through its incorporation within the movement of Maymūn al-Qaddāḥ into the one known historically as the Ismā‘īli

sect.¹⁹ The interference and the coincidence should also be indicated of the discursive movement of Qaddāḥ with the movement of Hamdan Qurmuṭ – founder of the Qarmaṭian sect (Qarāmiṭah) which intersects with the Ismā‘īli in terms of religious creed and esoteric orientation. And, of the appearance of the two movements together in the days of al-Ma’mūn, al-Baghdādī says: ‘The propaganda of the Bāṭinīyah during the days of al-Ma’mūn originated from Hamdan Qurmuṭ and ‘Abdullah bin Maymūn al-Qaddāḥ.’²⁰

Thus, these are the historical conditions and circumstances that manufactured the dream of al-Ma’mūn. The opponents of the ‘Abbāsīd state such as the Shī‘ites had succeeded in imposing their cultural control over a wide sector of their subjects, and the ‘thought’ began to transform into a ‘material force’, into a secret ruling order. It was clear to al-Ma’mūn that resistance against heretics by the sword was no longer viable after it became clear that every opponent was classifying his rival as a heretic, so he resorted to ‘rational debates’ which he organised personally, just as he resorted to a similar strategy when he saw that the opinions of the masses sympathised with the case of the Shī‘ites due to the ethical behaviour and reputation of Ja‘far al-Šādiq, and particularly when it became clear to him that a clandestine Shī‘ite order was crystallising and spreading after the death of Ja‘far. This new strategy of his was on two fronts: inducing the Shī‘ite movement to disclose, by itself, its clandestine organisations on the one hand, and planning to resist the Shī‘ite esoteric (*bāṭinī*) creed on the other.

The first aspect of the strategy of al-Ma’mūn was represented by an expression of sympathy towards the Shī‘ite cause and its partisans, and he went as far as the extent of announcing, in AH 201, the eighth Imam of the Twelver Shī‘ite Imamate, ‘Alī al-Riḍā bin Mūsā al-Kāzīm bin Ja‘far al-Šādiq, as his successor and consequently transferring the caliphate from the ‘Abbāsīds to the ‘Alawites. He began the implementation of this strategy by donning the colour green – the emblem of the ‘Alawites – and removing the colour black, the emblem of the ‘Abbāsīds. Shī‘ite sources affirm that this was nothing but a ruse intended to induce the Shī‘ite movement to disclose its organisation and their leaders and consequently to subsequently get rid of them and ‘Alī al-Riḍā. These sources seek to confirm their claims given the course of events as ‘Alī al-Riḍā was murdered and al-Ma’mūn returned to wearing the colour black, the emblem of the ‘Abbāsīds, as well as mandating the succession of his brother al-Mu‘taṣim. On this subject, al-Qifṭī mentions in the course of his words on the astrologist ‘Abdullah bin Sahl bin Nawbakht a story

carrying a lesson which we cite as follows: al-Qiftī says of the above-mentioned astrologist:

He is an astrologist of al-Ma'mūn (related to the al-Ma'mūn) highly esteemed in his craft; al-Ma'mūn acknowledges his repute in that, and he used to only promote remarkable scholars after selection. Al-Ma'mūn had seen the family of the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, fearful and hiding, due to the fear of al-Manṣūr and those who came after him among the sons of 'Abbās, and he saw that many things have been hidden from the masses through concealing their own issues so they thought of them in the same way they thought of the prophets and spoke of their qualities in a way that took them out of the [Islamic] *sharī'ah* to extremism, so he intended to punish the general public for this. However, he subsequently considered that if he did so to the masses he would only increase them in the extremism of their devotion, so he looked into the matter very precisely: 'if they were brought out before the people and they saw the corruption of the corrupt and the injustice of the wrongdoer, they would be brought down before their eyes and their gratitude towards them would be transformed into casting blame. Then, he said: if we command them to appear, they will be afraid and hide and suspect evil of us: it is therefore my opinion that we should promote one of them and present him to them as an imam, as if they see him, they will forget and will divulge what they have of existing movements of people, and the condition of the masses will be realised for them as well as that upon which this persists and among that which is hidden. If that is effected, I will dismiss the person I have appointed and return things to the way they were.' And this idea grew stronger, and he kept it confidential from his advisors. Al-Faḍl bin Sahl appeared as he intended to appoint an imam from the family members of the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī whom he considered suitable for this and they unanimously chose 'Alī al-Riḍā, so al-Faḍl bin Sahl decreed and arranged that, yet he did not know the real truth behind this and he took to choosing the time for the pledge [*bay'ah*] of allegiance to al-Riḍā. He chose the time when Cancer is ascending in the Zodiac in Mercury. 'Abdullah bin Sahl bin Nawbakht said that, I wanted to know the intention of al-Ma'mūn behind this *bay'ah* and if what is apparent is the same thing as his real intention or not, because it is a great thing. So I sent him, before the agreement, a message with one of his confidants among his servants, he came straight away, and I told him that this *bay'ah* is at the time he had chosen possessed of dual leaderships (that is, al-Faḍl bin Sahl) and that it could not be accomplished, but on the contrary it would be invalidated because Mercury even if it is ascendant in its rising house of the zodiac, Cancer is an unstable zodiac,

and on the fourth, is in the evil house of Mars and it is sinister; and the one possessed of dual leaderships might be heedless of this. So he wrote to me: "I have taken this into consideration, God reward you for your effort, but be extremely wary of informing the one of the two leaderships about this, because if he changes his mind I will know that you were the one who alerted him." The one of the dual leaderships comprehended that, but I did not cease from trying to convince him of his first opinion, in the fear that al-Ma'mūn would accuse me, and I was not relieved until the issue of the *bay'ah* had passed, and I was safe from from al-Ma'mūn.²¹

Whether this account is true or not, it is confirmed historically that al-Ma'mūn actually announced the commitment to give the *bay'ah* to 'Alī al-Riḍā, but this latter was assassinated, poisoned, and al-Ma'mūn reneged on the idea of transferring the caliphate to the 'Alawites. Of course, the tumult stirred up by fanatics of the 'Abbāsids following the declaration of al-Ma'mūn about the *bay'ah* of 'Alī al-Riḍā was not conducive to an atmosphere of trust necessary for the success of the plan attributed to al-Ma'mūn by Shī'ite historians, the plan to compel the Shī'ite clandestine organisations to appear and disclose themselves . . . but this did not prevent al-Ma'mūn from moving forward in implementing the other aspect of his strategy – the one reflected in his famous dream, by which I refer to the resort to Aristotle and 'Greek' universal reason.

Al-Ma'mūn oriented, then, towards Aristotle to confront gnostic Manicheanism and Shī'ite illuminationism which are of the same nature, as both intended to found their opposition to the 'Abbāsīd state on a weapon not available to the 'Abbāsīds who headed the Sunni caliphate which believed in the end of prophecy with the final and absolute cessation of revelation (*al-wahy*) with Muḥammad the 'seal' of the prophets and messengers. So it was necessary to find a weapon of defiance to confront 'resigned reason' and its Manichean and Shī'ite suppositions. And there was no other weapon than 'universal reason' (*al-'aql al-kawnī*) which is its historic opponent. Hereafter, the 'Abbāsīd state endeavoured, during the days of al-Ma'mūn, to ensconce this reason in Arab-Islamic culture and establish an alliance between it and the Arab religious 'rational' in order to repel the gnostic attacks that were threatening not only the 'Abbāsīds as a state but also the 'official' religious thought in both its Mu'tazilite and Sunni forms. In this regard, Heinrich Becker says:

Gnosticism was then opposing Islam religiously and politically, and in this struggle, Islam had recourse to Greek philosophy and endeavoured to find in

the intellectual religious knowledge a world similar to the world of the Age of Scholasticism in Europe during Medieval times. Therefore, it was as though official Islam had formed an alliance with Greek thought and philosophy against gnosticism . . . and from this point of view, we can interpret the enthusiasm of Caliph al-Ma'mūn in endeavouring to translate the largest possible number of Greek philosophical writings into Arabic, and this enthusiasm is not very well understood and common with peoples of the Orient. Thus, people have explained this up until now by relating it to the inclination of this enlightened excessive despot (al-Ma'mūn) towards knowledge/science and his passion for it. Yet, if the desire to translate the books of the ancient physicians had arisen due to the reputation of great medical schools out of a practical necessity for these books, perhaps the translation of Aristotle's books arose out of practical necessity as well, or else, if it is a matter of enthusiasm for knowledge and purely a desire to acquire it, then, the works of Homer or the tragedians would have been translated as well. However, the fact is that people did not seek recourse to them nor did they perceive the necessity of them.²²

Just as the Shī'ite sources confirm the first aspect of the strategy of al-Ma'mūn and accuse him of masterminding the assassination of 'Alī al-Riḍā, so the same sources confirm the second aspect of the same strategy and accuse him of working to eradicate the 'knowledge of prophecy' by disseminating Greek philosophy. And the same sources consider the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity (*Rasā'il al-Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*) as the Ismā'īli Shī'ite reaction against this aspect of the cultural strategy of al-Ma'mūn. Accordingly, the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* with their Hermetic irrational character, which we emphasised in the previous chapter, was the Ismā'īli Shī'ite response to this recourse by al-Ma'mūn to 'Greek' universal reason. The Yemeni historian Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn, (d. AH 872) says in volume four of *Uyūn al-Akhhbār (The Wellsprings of Reported Knowledge)*: 'The pious Imam Aḥmad bin 'Abdullah bin Muḥammad bin Ismā'il bin Ja'far al-Ṣādiq bin Muḥammad al-Bāqir bin 'Alī bin al-Ḥusayn bin 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib had exercised the imamate [succession] after his father and sent his preachers to the far horizons from Salamīyah [in Syria] . . . and when al-Ma'mūn tricked 'Alī al-Riḍā bin Mūsā bin Ja'far, he thought that God's command had prevailed and his authority was settled, and when the 'Abbāsīd al-Ma'mūn had thought so and was deluded by this thought, he sought modification of the law [*sharī'ah*] of Muḥammad and changing it; he also sought to turn people to philosophy and the knowledge of the Greeks. So the Imam feared that people might incline towards these ornamental vanities of al-Ma'mūn, and move away from the law of his grand-

father, so he composed the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity.’ The same historian adds when presenting the index of the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity: ‘The Imam Aḥmad composed these epistles for the purpose of establishing cogent proof against al-Ma’mūn and his followers when they deviated from the knowledge of prophecy.’ The same thing can be found with the Yemeni scholar Sharaf al-Dīn Ja‘far bin Muḥammad bin Ḥamzah (d. AH 834), who confirms also that the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity had been composed by the aforementioned Imam Aḥmad when ‘the so-called al-Ma’mūn intended to revert the *ummah* to the religion that professes astrology.’ Nevertheless, the oldest Ismā‘īli source available to-date confirming the historical side of the above-mentioned story is the Moroccan judge Nu‘mān bin Ḥayūn al-Tamīmī (d. AH 363), the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* in the Fāṭimid State, who mentions in *Al-Risālah al-Mudhahhabah* (*The Golden Letter*) (p. 72) ‘The surreptitious Imams, ‘Abdullah and Aḥmad and Ḥusayn and the four herald composers of the *Epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*, ‘Abdullah bin Ḥamdān and ‘Abdullah bin Sa‘īd and ‘Abdullah bin Maymūn and ‘Abdullah bin al-Mubārak . . .’²³

It is obvious that while these texts confirm that the *Epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* were Ismā‘īli, the date attributed to their authorship is considerably earlier than the date adopted up to now according to the account of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī in his book *Al-Imtā‘ wa al-Mu‘ānasah*, which considers that the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity were written by a group of writers of his own era – about the year AH 373. The Ismā‘īli character of the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity is patently obvious through its subject matter. As for the date when they were authored, it is related, according to the subject matter of its texts also, to the ‘period of concealment’ namely to a certain date prior to the establishment of the Fāṭimid State in AH 296, that which corresponds to what is confirmed by the previous texts. When we know that the Imam ‘Abdullah to whom Ismā‘īli accounts attribute the initiation of the composition of the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity died in AH 212, and that his son Aḥmad – considered by the same stories to be the actual supervisor over the completion of their writing – died around the year AH 229, we realise that the *Epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* were, in fact, a response from the Shī‘ite Bāṭinīyah to the cultural strategy of al-Ma’mūn, the strategy that had aimed at resisting the Shī‘ite illuminationist suppositions with rational ones that adopted the knowledge of Aristotle and his logic in particular. The *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity came as a part of an Ismā‘īli counter-strategy based on promoting and deepening the irrational gnostic ‘esoteric (*bāṭinī*)’ trend in Arab-Islamic culture, for the purpose of ‘possession the souls’

concluding with 'possession of the bodies'.²⁴ And, the 'resigned reason', that is, Hermetic and Neo-Pythagorean literature in particular, would become the point of departure from which the 'religio-philosophy' had arisen, that religion which the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity intended to disseminate in order for it to become the universal religion of all religions . . . it is a kind of ideology of 'unanimous consensus – *al-ijmāʿ*' intended to be achieved by 'the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity and partisans of loyalty' versus the authority of the all-encompassing 'universal reason' intended to be achieved by al-Maʿmūn, in order to consolidate the authority of the single state, the authority of it being affirmed universally just as the caliphal state affirmed its authority.

The embedding of universal reason in Arab-Islamic culture came, then, within the context of a political and ideological conflict between the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Maʿmūn and the opponents of his state, the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) Shīʿites. The ancient heritage was utilised as a weapon in this struggle: and thus, while the Shīʿites resorted to gnosis – to the 'resigned reason' to confirm the continuity of revelation in their Imams and, consequently, to confirm their right to the imamate and leadership of the Muslims – religiously and politically, al-Maʿmūn resorted to 'Greek' universal reason to reinforce the aspect of the Arab religious rational as advocated by the Muʿtazilah and ensconced by political reality. The question now becomes one of how the process of establishing that universal reason was completed and in which direction.

* * *

We consider it necessary to put aside for a while the ambiguous circumstances and conditions that were precipitated by this historical process initiated and supervised personally by al-Maʿmūn, the process of the transference of Greek knowledge, the knowledge of 'universal reason' into the Arabic language. The reason for this is that bringing up these circumstances and conditions is necessary, not only to comprehend the motives behind this process and the political and ideological dimensions, but also to track the course of evolution which would subsequently occur in Arab-Islamic thought as well as its repercussions in the formation of Arab reason itself. But we have not yet identified the status of 'Greek' universal reason, and in particular the logic of Aristotle and his knowledge, within Arab-Islamic culture *before* the rule of al-Maʿmūn and, consequently, the doubts we raised at the beginning of this chapter concerning the presence of Aristotelian logic in this culture before the 'dream' of al-Maʿmūn still lack

what could justify them directly and thus render them a historical truth. It is time now to discuss this issue in the same general historical milieu.

There is no doubt that the early Muʿtazilah, and in particular their leaders such as Abū Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf and al-Nazzām, had employed concepts belonging to the ‘rationally reasonable’ (*al-maʿqūl al-ʿaqlī*) in the ancient heritage in their responses to Manicheanism. However, they did so partially, and in an ‘immature’ way according to the terms of al-Shahristānī. They exchanged, back and forth, concepts from Greek natural science not susceptible to the Hermetic magical orientation, but they did not aspire in their dealing with the products of the ‘universal reason’ to a level of systemisation. True, the sources mention that some of those early Muʿtazilites responded to Aristotle himself, but the absence of the actual texts of those responses prevents us from deciding whether such were addressed to the genuine Aristotle or pseudoepigraphic Aristotle, or whether the issue related to something else. There is that which reinforces doubts that the Muʿtazilites had genuinely comprehended Aristotle, including their continued adherence to their preferred method in demonstration (*al-istidlāl*) (proving what is unseen [*in absentia*] by what is witnessed [*in praesentia*]) and through ‘the rational axiomatic presuppositions’ that they posited for results predetermined by them. Further indication may be found in the organic connection of their methodology with the Arab *bayān* and the Arabic language. All of this constitutes a barrier between them and Aristotle and his logic which is very difficult to overcome, a barrier which prevented them from comprehending him and responding to him at his level. And the following incident recounted by al-Qifṭī is significant proof in this regard.

Al-Qifṭī reports while speaking of the book *Al-Samāʾ wa al-ʿĀlam* (*Heaven and the World*) by Aristotle, its translations and glosses: ‘And Abū Hāshim al-Jibāʾī had something to say and respond to it [i.e., to Aristotle’s work] in a tome he entitled *Al-Taṣaffuḥ* where he invalidated some of Aristotle’s fundamentals and criticised him with utterances that [actually] undermined the bases on which he established and based his book.’ Then Al-Qifṭī adds: ‘And I have heard that Yaḥyā bin ʿUday was present in a gathering of some ministers in Baghdad one fine day, and there was a group of *mutakallimūn* attended this gathering, so the minister said to them: “Engage in discourse with Sheikh Yaḥyā as he is the chief exponent of discourse of the philosophical sect”, but Yaḥyā declined, and when he asked him for the reason Yaḥyā said: “They do not comprehend the rules and bases of my expressions and I do not comprehend their terminology, and I am afraid that the same thing will happen to me that happened to al-Jibāʾī in the book *al-Taṣaffuḥ* when he contradicted the discourse of Aristotle

and responded to him according to the measure which he imagined he understood him, but he did not know the fundamentals of logic so this spoiled his response to him even though he thought he had brought something new; however, if he *had* understood it [i.e., Aristotle], he would not have exhibited such a response.”²⁵ Thus, if the prominent Mu‘tazilite Abū Hāshim al-Jibā‘ī, who died in AH 321 – namely a century after al-Ma’mūn – could not assimilate in his response to Aristotle the fundamentals of logic and the principles of reason upon which the latter had founded his philosophy of nature, and if Yaḥyā bin ‘Uday, deceased in AH 363, complained of the ignorance by the Mu‘tazilah of his time of Aristotle and the fundamentals of his philosophy – even when they were in wide circulation and readily available at that time and not only through fine translations but also through the writings of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī – if this were the case, it would be correct for us to wonder about the extent of the knowledge of the early Mu‘tazilah of philosophy, and in particular the philosophy of Aristotle. Moreover, we would be equally justified in doubting the value of their responses to him.

In fact, Aristotle was *not* present in Arab-Islamic culture before the process of translation organised by al-Ma’mūn except in some truncated fragments of his texts or through some interpretations and synopses. It is sufficient to review the date of the translation of his writing into Arabic, so as to realise to what extent ‘resigned reason’ was spreading and thoroughly penetrating the Arab culture without a real competitor for the first hundred years of the Era of Codification. Indeed, the first book by Aristotle that was translated into Arabic was, according to the available sources, *Heaven and the World*, as previously mentioned, which was translated by Johann Paṭrīq (d. AH 200), and it seems that this translation was not a complete one of all of the content of the book, or the language employed was complicated, poor and vague; and therefore Ḥunayn bin Isḥāq (d. AH 260) was obliged to restore it, as noted by Ibn al-Nadīm.²⁶ For this reason, we can easily say that the beginning of the real presence of Aristotle, in terms of logic, knowledge and philosophy, was through the translations of Ḥunayn and his son Isḥāq, (d. AH 298). As for pseudo-Aristotle, he had infiltrated Arab culture through the ‘Ontology’ translated by Ibn Nā‘imah of Homs (d. AH 220). Thus, it is patently obvious that the presence of Aristotle in Arab-Islamic culture had not been in evidence until the rule of al-Ma’mūn and, then, through his cultural strategy and within its framework. It should be noted here that this presence had been achieved gradually and over several stages, and sufficient proof of that is that the book of demonstration or ‘The Posterior Analytics’ of Aristotelian logic had not

been translated into Arabic until the fourth century AH, and specifically by Abū Bishr Mattā bin Yūnus (d. AH 328), who was a contemporary of al-Fārābī. This is precisely what we would now emphasise.

It is true that Ibn al-Nadīm mentions the translation by ‘Ibn al-Muqaffa’ of parts of the Aristotelian logic and in particular the book *Maqūlāt* (categories) with the epitome of the book entitled *al-Ibārah* (*Topics*), and we know that Ibn al-Muqaffa’ died in AH 142. Šā‘id al-Andalusī confirms this and adds the book of *Prior Analytics* and the introduction to the *Isagoge* – the book of logic by Porphyry – to what was mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm of the translations of ‘Ibn al-Muqaffa’.²⁷ However, Paul Kraus, who was interested in the matter and wrote a valuable thesis on it concluded that the issue is related not, in fact, to ‘Abdullah bin Muqaffa’ but to his *son* Muḥammad who endeavoured ‘during the rule of al-Mahdī or al-Hādī (between AH 158 and 170) in summarising and translating the books of the *Organon* for Yaḥyā bin Khālīd’. Kraus adds: ‘It is crucial to the history of Aristotelianism in Islam to determine that the first translator mentioned here only translated the first three books of the *Organon*, following in that, the normative course of the Syriac [translators] . . . however, the knowledge the Aristotelian philosophy did not extend to the books not on logic until the reign of al-Ma’mūn.’²⁸ Thus, if all the writings of Aristotle of those that have reached us in their Greek originals had been translated once or more into Arabic, and if these translations have reached us – except the book *On Generation and Corruption* and ‘the last two tracts from the *Metaphysics*’²⁹ – then all this is due to the movement of translation that had been initiated by al-Ma’mūn when he put all the services of the state at its disposal, and which proceeded uninterrupted until the second half of the fourth century AH with Yaḥyā bin ‘Uday and Ibn Zur‘ah. This movement had ‘presented to all Muslims the books of Aristotle’,³⁰ according to the terms employed by Paul Kraus.

It should be noted that Aristotle was absent in Arab-Islamic culture before al-Ma’mūn, and he was also absent within the epistemological field during the Hellenistic era where Hermeticism and Neo-Platonism prevailed as we have previously indicated (in Chapter Eight). Aristotelian logic, then, was being disseminated within Christian theological circles from the first century CE, but the theologians did not utilise it in their religious debates except for the metaphorical/conceptual aspect of it and in particular *analogy* (the *Prior Analytics*). As for proof and its fundamentals and consequently the rational and logical bases, they rejected them and even *forbade* recourse to them. They were also considered as ‘*mutakallimūn*’ who had posited predetermined conclusions, and all they intended was merely the conceptual

establishment of these foregone conclusions and the defence of a certain point of view against another, but always within the same circle and within the same scope, the circle of the faith in the 'Trinity' and its Christian framework. Here, we ought to cite a text by al-Fārābī of a great historic value. Ibn Abū Uṣayba'ah had quoted from a book by al-Fārābī which has not reached us, speaking of the 'emergence of philosophy', teaching that philosophy had ended up, after the rise of the Roman Empire, in two centres: Alexandria and Rome, and 'The matter continued as such until the emergence of Christianity, so the teaching in Rome was discontinued and that of Alexandria remained, until the king of the Christians attended to this and the bishops were gathered to discuss what should be kept from this teaching and what should be invalidated, so they decided to keep the book on logic and teach [the sections] until the *Sophistical Refutations* and nothing further, because they saw it as constituting a threat to Christianity, and the things that should be taught ought to be adapted to uphold their religion. Therefore, the teachings – to this extent – remained and everything else was concealed until the emergence of Islam after a long while, and thus, teaching was transferred from Alexandria to Antioch.' Al-Fārābī said that 'he learned from Yūhannā bin Ḥaylān all the way up to *sylogisms*, and after that what was called the *Sophistical Refutations*, the part that should not be read, until it was read in fact, and the form such that a person could read.'³¹ Meirhoff quotes from Renan and Achtinschinder that 'the Syriac translation of *Organon* used to cease at the chapter of the *Prior Analytics*',³² which reinforces the account of al-Fārābī who confirms on the one hand that the study of the Aristotelian logic had not begun in Islam, except with *him* – that is, with al-Fārābī who died in AH 339.

We may draw from the foregoing the following conclusion, namely that the presence of ancient heritage within Arab-Islamic culture was, during the period of al-Ma'mūn, an extension of the previous situation – namely a continuation of the Hellenistic era: in terms of culture, knowledge and epistemological order. With al-Ma'mūn, and due to the conditions and circumstances we have previously explained, a movement of 'revival' and 'enlightenment' had been initiated – based on the return to the 'fundamentals', to 'universal reason',³³ and in particular to Aristotle, his philosophy knowledge and logic. And, if we regard what transpired in light of the distinction we have made in the previous chapter between the 'popular' Hermeticism and the 'scholastic' Hermetism, it would be admissible to say that Islam was a revolution when it emerged in Mecca against the 'popular' Hermeticism as represented by the worship of idols understood to be intermediaries with God. Similarly, it would be permissible to assert that the movement of 'revival'

emerging during the rule of al-Ma'mūn was a revolution against the scholastic Hermetism represented in particular by Shī'ite illuminationism based on belief in the continuity of prophecy in the persons of the Imams. Hence came the 'historical' meeting between the Arab *religious rational* and the Greek-Aristotelian *rational of reason*, between the epistemological order of the Arab *bayān* and the Greek epistemological order of the *burhān* (evidenciary proof/demonstration). And it is crucial for us here to acknowledge the content of this meeting and its dimensions and then the forms of the presence of the 'universal reason' within Arab-Islamic culture.

The Rebutals of al-Kindī

Al-Kindī (AH 185–252) was the 'first Arab philosopher' belonging to a famous Arab tribe, that of al-Kindah. He was the first philosopher of 'state of reason' in Islam, the state that had as its official mission staving off the 'resigned reason' as employed by its opponents including Manicheans and Shī'ites – the 'Abbāsīd state of al-Ma'mūn, al-Mu'taṣim and al-Wāthiq – and al-Kindī was contemporaneous with all of them just as he was with al-Mutawakkil during whose rule he was subject to some persecutions in the context of the 'Sunni coup' led by this caliph against the Mu'tazilah. Al-Kindī was then engaged in the ideological struggle occurring at this time, and he fought on the side of that 'state of reason' through disseminating abstracts of his treatises on the pure philosophical knowledge (free from Hermetic orientation) in the form of small pamphlets focused on ease of comprehension and transferring to the Arabic reader, for the first time, rational scientific views on the universe and the human being in a fashion that would accord respect to the Arab *religious rational*, or even support it in its struggle against Manicheanism and the esoteric Shī'ism of the Bāṭinīyah. Thus, in addition to his epistles on natural sciences, in which he adopted the views of Aristotle in general based on an epistemological system in complete contradiction with the epistemological order of the *'irfān* (illumination), a system oriented from the perceptual to the intelligible and from the specific to the abstract, depending on natural experiment and accumulated social experience and not psychological mystical (Sufi) experience. In addition to these epistles on nature, al-Kindī confronted the fundamental suppositions of 'resigned reason', so he attacked it on its own terms and endeavoured to extirpate its claims:

Thus, we find al-Kindī writing his *al-Radd 'alā al-Manānīyah wa al-Mathmawīyah* in direct fashion, namely through books bearing the same title,

just as we also find him confronting Hermeticism through exposing the corrupt nature of its fundamental suppositions. He decreed the baselessness of alchemy and he authored a book on this issue entitled *Kitāb al-Tanbīh ‘alā Khida‘ al-Kīmīyā’ iyyīn* (*The Book of Warning against the Deception of the Alchemists*) and *Kitāb fī Ibtāl Da‘wā man yadda‘ī Ṣun‘at al-Dhahab wa al-Fiḍḍah* (*A Book on Invalidating the Claim of any who Claims the Ability to Produce Gold and Silver [through Alchemy]*) and he refutes the conception of the supreme God [in the Hermetic cosmology] and everything that is connected to it such as the invalidation of prophecy in composing *Kitāb fī al-Tawḥīd ‘alā Sabīl Aṣḥāb al-Manṭiq wa Kitāb fī Ithbāt al-Nabuwwah ‘alā tilka al-Sabīl* (*A Book on [divine] Oneness according to the Method of the Exponents of Logic and a Book Confirming Prophecy according to this Method*)³⁴ the path of the proponents of logic, antithetical to the path of the exponents of illuminationism.

Moreover, the process of ensconcing ‘universal reason’ initiated by al-Kindī within Arab-Islamic culture encompassed at the same time the return to the theory of Aristotle on reason along with distancing it from Neo-Platonic interpretations that made of the ‘agent intellect/reason (*al-‘aql al-fa‘āl*)’ asserted by Aristotle an intellect/reason separate from all heavenly intelligences. Therefore, al-Kindī differentiated between ‘potential intellect reason’, which is a mere readiness of the soul to accept intelligibles, and ‘active/agent reason’, that is the resulting influence in the soul when it encounters intelligibles, which is also termed by al-Kindī as the ‘the demonstrative intellect/reason (*al-‘aql al-bayānī*)’ or ‘the apparent intellect/reason’ (*al-‘aql al-ẓāhir*)³⁵ when it is subject to use by the soul. The ‘active agent/reason’ asserted by Aristotle, who considered that its role is to drive the spirit from force potential to action and which is considered by al-Kindī ‘the reason that is perpetually active’, it is for him nothing else but ‘the universality of things’ before their occurring in the soul, which when they occur in it become: ‘the acquired intellect/reason’ (*al-‘aql al-mustafād*). Al-Kindī says: ‘the soul is rational in effect when the types are unified in it, and before this unification it was rational by potential force. And everything is of some potential force but it is driven to effect by something else which is this emergence from potential into effect. And the thing that draws out the soul, which is rational by potential to become rational in effect by which I mean the unification within it of the species of things and their genus – that is in their universality – their universality in essences, their unification with the soul which has an affinity for them – that is, it has some sort of reason and rational cognisance of the universals of things. Therefore, when the universality of things, when they are in the soul are emerging from potential to actual, is the beneficial reason of the

soul which had been potential, and it is the reason which in actuality is that which draws the soul from the potential to the actual.³⁶ Therefore, it is completely wrong to compare ‘the reason which is the reason in actuality’ asserted by al-Kindī, and the active intellect asserted by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, who rank it as the ‘tenth reason’ in series of heavenly intelligences in their view. And this is because al-Kindī does perceive in ‘active/agent reason’ the influence of Aristotle other than ‘universals’ (i.e., the axioms). Moreover, he neglects the idea of ‘emanation’ (*fayḍ*), which is the basis of the interpretations of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā for the theory of Aristotle on reason. He also refuses to term God as a rational intelligence (*aql*) so that He might not be enumerated along with the rest of intelligibles, as God for him is one in all aspects: He is ‘the One, the Truth. He is not a thing among intelligibles nor an element nor a genus or a type . . . nor a soul nor a rational intelligence . . . and not one [thing] in addition to something else, but rather One and Infinite.’³⁷

Al-Kindī explicitly denied the hierarchy posited by Hermeticism and Neo-Platonism and all of the gnostic orientations towards the divine world through which the divine knowledge connects to the human knowledge, rendering it an extension of that ‘One and Infinite’ meaning: there is no other divine being along with God such as the ‘absolute reason’ or ‘the tenth reason’ – the agent – besides God, where the mutually shared gnosis occurs and is expressed by the means of the chasm that separates God from the world epistemologically and ontologically. Al-Kindī rejects all ‘intermediates’ posited by Hermeticism and Neo-Platonism between God and the world and he perceives the relation between them, in terms of ontology and epistemology, according to a strictly Islamic conception, just as that the Mu‘tazilah in particular, and he consecrates this conception with a philosophical discourse on the content according to an Aristotelian inclination against gnostic conceptions in their various orientations.

Thus, in the sphere of knowledge, al-Kindī makes a crucial distinction between ‘the knowledge of the messengers’ (*‘ilm al-rusul*, i.e., the prophets) and ‘the knowledge of the rest of humanity’. The first is ‘without seeking and effort, research and without the tricks of mathematics and logic and is not subject to a particular time, but by the will of God the Most Magnificent through the purification of their souls and their illumination of the truth, by His support and guidance, inspiration and His messages. Hence, this knowledge is specific to messengers and not common people, and it is one of their wondrous characteristics – I mean one of the decisive signs distinguishing them from other human beings.’³⁸ As for the second, namely the knowledge of human beings, it is clear from the text

that it comes through seeking, research and rational demonstration and within a particular time . . . and undoubtedly, the affirmation of al-Kindī is that the prophecy is specific to messengers and that it is their signs [i.e., the divine signs which they are given] that distinguish them from other human beings which is tantamount to closing the door before any other method of acquiring knowledge and consequently denying gnostic illumination. So knowledge for al-Kindī is either *perceptual* and its instruments are the senses and its object perceived things, or cognitive/mental (*‘aqlīyah*) and its instruments are reason, its objects among intelligibles – namely the abstract concepts. As for divinity and its divine instruments, these are the messengers of God, and their subject is the divine realm comprised of ‘the allegorical, the [illustrative and demonstrative technique of the] *bayān*, the proximity of the ways and encompassing what is demanded’.³⁹

As for the sphere of existence, it is well known that al-Kindī adopts the religious hypothesis considering the ‘incidental creation [*ḥudūth*] of the world’, and in order to support this concept and accord rationality to he draws from concepts of Aristotelian philosophy: concepts of celestial bodies, time, motion and finiteness and infiniteness and the First Cause . . . He proves that the celestial body of the world is finite, that time is finite and that motion is finite as well; and, from these, he concludes from this the finite character of the world and its incidental creation [in time]. And the ‘incidental creation of the world’ means that God created it *ex nihilo* and without intermediates. God is ‘the First Cause that has no cause, the agent that has no agent, the completer which has no completion . . . and the initiator of all from what is not and the one who destines [*al-muṣayyir*] some things by others through reasons and causes’.⁴⁰

Thus, the fact that there is the distinction between the knowledge of the messengers and the knowledge of other human beings does not imply any contradiction between them. The same is true in the case of *religious* truth, which does not contradict *rational* truth but which is another manifestation of a single truth. Al-Kindī says ‘that the assertion of the truthful Muḥammad and the things he transmitted by leave of God almighty persist according to all rational standards, which are not rejected except by those who are deprived from the concept of reason and characterised by the ignorant among people. As for those who believe in the message of Muḥammad and who believed in him, and then subsequently deny that with which he came and who rejects the interpretations of those pressed of religion and brains among those who took from what Muḥammad brought, then apparently there is weakness in their faculties of discrimination, if such a person invalidates what he affirms and has no sense of what results from that, or whoever ignores the cause

and reason for which the Messenger came and does not cognise the correspondence of nominal forms or the derivations [from these] or conjugations [of verbs] even though these are many in the Arabic language, this is common to every language.⁴¹ So religious truth does not contradict reason, but sometimes it is not always readily apparent from the text but may require interpretation. And interpretation in this circumstance does not indicate a superseding of the conceptual milieu when the Qurʾān was revealed and transferring it to another far distant as the exponents of the esoteric Bāṭiniyah do. Al-Kindī emphasises the necessity of respecting the modality of the Arabic language in expression simultaneously with the inclination towards pure rational syntactic interpretation. Thus, when his disciple Muʿtaṣim (i.e., the caliph) asked him the meaning of the verse ‘The star and the trees prostrate’ (Q 55:6), he warned of the untenability of rigidly abiding by the apparent meaning of the verse as the stars can not truly prostrate as is textually mandated in Islamic *sharīʿah* for prayer; and he said that the ‘prostration’ of the stars is their rotation in their orbits and their abiding by their movements from which emanate natural phenomena, whether atmospheric or terrestrial, and consequently, accomplishing their role predetermined by the Creator, the role of maintaining the order of the world.⁴² This is in marked contradistinction to the Hermetic esoteric trends in interpretation at the time, which consider that the stars are divine beings of reason, or at least driven by ‘heavenly divine intelligences’, and which could actually perform kneeling and praise, and so forth.

Just as al-Kindī worked to defend the Arab religious ‘rational’ against Manichean gnosticism, Shiʿite illuminationism and esoteric interpretation, he worked at the same time to defend the ‘rational of the reason’, philosophy and its knowledge, i.e., against the *fuqahāʾ* and *mutakallimūn* opposing ‘the knowledge/sciences of the ancients’ for reasons, the political origins of which we have previously described. Al-Kindī calls for the necessity of drawing from the ‘ancients’ and surpassing that wherein they were deficient with all the respect and recognition due to their merit, saying: ‘Among the essential obligations of truth is that we do not blame whoever was one of the reasons for our benefits that have been acquired as minor and inconsequential as they may be, so how should it be for those who constitute the reasons behind the mighty benefits we acquire which are profound and correct? As even if they were deficient by some rights, they were our forebears and partners in what they have bequeathed to us, as fruits of their thought became our paths and instruments leading to more knowledge through employing them in order to achieve where they may have failed to achieve of the truth . . . So our gratitude ought to magnify those

who came with a little of the truth as well as those who came with a great measure of the truth, as they have shared with us the fruit of their thoughts and facilitated our searches for the hidden truth with what they have provided including the introductions which facilitated our paths towards the truth, because had they not done what they did, we could not have acquired what we have acquired, with the difficulty of research in all our endeavour, these precursors of truth from which we have derived our search for what is hidden. All this had occurred in the previous eras of the ancestors, era after era, up until our age with difficulty of research and the necessity of endeavour and perseverance.' Al-Kindī adds: 'And we must not feel ashamed of perfecting the truth and acquiring the truth from wherever it comes, even if it comes from strangers and divergent nations, as nothing is better than seeking the truth from truth.' Furthermore, al-Kindī does not hesitate to expose the political factors and motives of self-interest that incite those who attack philosophy and consider its partisans to be disbelievers in the name of 'religion'. Al-Kindī describes them as 'the people estranged from the truth even though they be crowned with the diadems of truth which they do not deserve' and that they oppose philosophy and attack its partisans 'to protect their false thrones that they have occupied with no merit, only to hold positions of leadership and for trading in religion and they are the enemies of religion, because whoever trades in something sells it and sells something which is not his. Thus whoever trades in religion has no religion and merits excommunication from religion – whoever opposes the acquisition of knowledge of things and their realities and calls it disbelief – because the knowledge of things in their realities is the knowledge of the divine and knowledge of the [divine] unicity and the best of knowledges and the sum of all knowledge, and it is a beneficence and the path to it and distancing from all that is harmful and guarding against such. The acquisition of all of this is that which truthful messenger [Muḥammad] brought from Allāh the Most Magnificent and Peerless.'⁴³

It is obvious from the foregoing that the process of investing reason in Arab-Islamic culture was not an easy one, as it was necessary to confront Manichean gnosticism and Shī'ite-Hermetic illuminationism on the one hand, and the inevitable negative reactions from the circles of *fuqahā'* and *mutakallimūn* who adopted a hostile attitude to the 'knowledge of the ancients' from the outset, on the other hand – for reasons already explained. And as we have emphasised in the preceding pages, al-Kindī conducted the battle on two fronts simultaneously. However, the emulous character imposed by this battle caused the rational discourse of al-Kindī to remain

a discourse of debate, a discourse of categorical assertion rather than a discourse of the rational proof of *burhān*. And, if he admitted on many occasions that the circumstances had required such a ‘narrative method’ (*al-sabīl al-khabarī*) – according to his terminology – in presenting what he desired to present including views and theories, this did not prevent some critics from assailing the weaknesses of logic in his discourse and the imperfection and deficiency in his writings. Ṣā‘id al-Andalusī says after he had noted the sophistic and rhetorical character of the allegations of al-Kindī concerning ‘the incidental creation of the world’ that his books on logic ‘were rarely useful in knowledge because they were devoid of the analytical art which constitutes the only path to knowledge of the truth from the false in all that is required’. And Ṣā‘id adds: ‘As for the art of structuring that Ya‘qūb [al-Kindī] intended in his books, it is only of benefit for the person who is in possession of the precursors/presuppositions, as only then would it be possible to structure it. And the precursors/presuppositions of every thing required exists only in the art of analysis.’ Furthermore, Ṣā‘id wonders: ‘And I do not know what drove Ya‘qūb to refrain from this new art. Had he been ignorant of its value or had he, despite suppositions of people to the contrary or had he failed to discover it? In any case, whether it was for either of these reasons, it was a deficiency.’⁴⁴

In fact, this deficiency of the writings of al-Kindī on logic was not of his choice, as the utilisation of logic in circulation at his time was lacking the *Posterior Analytics* – the book which had not been translated to Arabic until the era of al-Fārābī, as we have previously indicated. Therefore, al-Fārābī would be the one qualified to correct this deficiency, and he would actually do so, but from another position and within the context of another problematic.

The Logic of al-Fārābī

It is true that al-Fārābī tended with his philosophy towards another course as he did not live under a strong central state such as that of al-Ma‘mūn and al-Mu‘taṣim, ‘the state of reason’ in Islam on which he could depend and respond to its opponents as al-Kindī had done. Rather, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (AH 260–339) lived in socio-political and intellectual circumstances that were entirely different. The caliphate – the central state – had become merely nominal as independent states and emirates had arisen: the Samanid Empire in Khurāsān, and the Buyid dynasty in Persia and Iraq, the Hamdanid

dynasty in Aleppo, and the Ikhshidid dynasty and the Fāṭimid in Egypt, in addition to Morocco and Andalusia which were independent at an early date. The Arab-Islamic empire had disintegrated into rival competitive states as a 'result' of the plurality of doctrines and sects and confessions and the complexity of views and ideologies, that which struck a blow simultaneously to the unity of authority and the continuity of the state, and consequently to the unity of thought and the permanence of society.

Al-Fārābī came, then, in circumstances marked by intellectual and socio-political disruption, so he aimed mainly to reunify thought and society: the reunification of thought through overcoming the 'theological' discourse of the *kalām*, couched in rivalry, controversy and full of sophistry, and adopting the discourse of the 'universal reason', the discourse of evidentiary proof and demonstration – that of the *burhān*. And the reunification of the community through instituting relationships inside of it on the basis of a new system equal to the system prevalent in the universe and governing its parts and its stations.⁴⁵ Hence, al-Fārābī directed his attention to logic on the one hand and to political philosophy on the other. And if the Perfect State (*al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*) [utopia] that he promoted was countenanced within Arab-Islamic culture as a mere dream, no one had endeavoured to rethink it. Even Ibn Khaldūn who devoted study to human civilisation and the systems of rule he considered 'far from reality' considered discussing such to be only 'speculation and assumption'.⁴⁶ If this were the destiny of the political philosophy of al-Fārābī, then the destiny of his works on logic was markedly different.

The truth is that Arab-Islamic culture is indebted to al-Fārābī, in the field of logic, more than any of those who came before or after him. While al-Kindī had indeed retrieved Aristotle, the natural teacher, entirely or almost, but his work was deficient in the field of logic and in particular in the sub-field of *proof* (*al-burhān*) as noted by Ṣāʿid. This constituted precisely the onerous endeavour of al-Fārābī noted by Ṣāʿid himself. Al-Fārābī effected a complete return to the art of logic 'So he encouraged all the peoples of Islam in it and called for research in it; and, he explained the ambiguities and revealed its secret, rendering it practicable to acquire as well as all what was necessary in books with correct and smooth expression and instructive indications among that which al-Kindī and others were oblivious, including the art of analysis and the categories of learning. He elucidated the discourse on the five matters of logic and depicted the beneficial aspects of these and explained the mode of employing them and how the form of syllogism [i.e., logical analogy or *al-qiyyās*] is employed in every matter, so his books towards that goal were sufficient and of a very satisfactory result.'⁴⁷ It is therefore that he was called 'the philosopher of the Muslims

par excellence⁴⁸ and deserves the accolade of ‘the second master’ that which placed him, from the perspective of Arab-Islamic culture, in his station second to Aristotle – ‘the *first* master’ – particularly in the art of logic.

Indeed, in terms of logic, al-Fārābī was the ‘Aristotle of the Arabs,’ not only because he retrieved the Aristotelian logic and understood it fully, deeply aware of its centrality, but also because he saw in it the path by which he could put an end to the intellectual chaos prevalent in his time. Hence, al-Fārābī cared to clarify the social role of logic; its role in terms of intellectual dealings within the community. Thus, if the ‘art of logic in general and its laws that rectify reason drive the human being towards the right path and towards the truth in all that wherein he might err among intelligibles,’⁴⁹ then the effective scope of these laws goes beyond the boundaries ‘of what we seek to correct with ourselves’ to ‘what we seek to correct with others’ and ‘what others seek to be correct with us’.⁵⁰

Al-Fārābī explains the importance of logic in intellectual/conceptual behaviour in the social and the individual milieu, as he says: ‘for if we have these laws and we perceive their intended derivation and amelioration ourselves we would be allowing [our minds to wander . . .] in search for what needs correction, roaming among unlimited things, meandering by all means and directions, leading us astray by deceiving us into thinking that what is incorrect is correct indeed, without our notice. But we must have known which path to follow and upon what we should depend and where should we initiate our conduct, and how could our minds perceive the right from wrong and how could we attempt to improve our minds about something with what is similar in nature until we inevitably reach our aim’. Then he adds: ‘this would be our situation in what we intend to correct in others, yet we would be correcting the view of others using the same tools and means that we use to rectify our own opinions, so if were debate according to the same line of arguments, proofs and categorical assertions that we employ while correcting these views, and if we were asked to require the means of their corrections and to prove how it is admissible to correct one view and not correct its opposite, and why is it a priority to rectify this particular view, we could explain all of these inquiries. And also, if others intend to correct a certain view of ours we would have material with which to rebut his categorical assertions and proofs which he intended to employ in correcting our view, then if it proved to be correct it would be clear from which side it is so, then we would accept the result knowingly and consciously, and if it is erroneous or wrong, it would be clear from which side it is so, so then we would invalidate it knowingly and consciously.’

Al-Fārābī confirms his interest in this role played by logic, or that which

it should play, to remove differences and achieve the unification of thought in society through emphasising the chaos that afflicts intellectual life within society due to the ignorance of logic, so he says:

And, if we are ignorant of logic, our state in all these things would be reversed and the opposite [of what it is now]. And more terrible and despicable than that, and which is best to avoid with caution, is what we will encounter if we wish to consider conflicting or opposing views or to judge between them on the categorical assertions and arguments which each brings to rectify his view and refute the view of his opponent. Verily, if we are ignorant of logic we will not be able to perceive with certainty which is correct [in his view] and which is incorrect and how so and in which aspect as well as how his argument verified the correctness of his view. The same applies to the errors and mistakes that one could make; [logic permits us to see] how his argument fails to prove the correctness of his view. If [we are ignorant of logic] then we will become confused about which is correct and which is incorrect: either we are confused by all the points of view to the extent that we cannot perceive the correct from the incorrect; or we assume that all of its inconsistencies and contradictions are actually valid; or we speculate that none of them are correct; so such a situation would impel us to engage in correcting some and invalidating others and commend what is correct and refute what is invalid without knowing from which standpoint any of this is correct.⁵¹

Logic is considered of such importance because by employing it we can ‘consider all the aspects and matters whereby the mind is compelled to the effect that some thing is like such [and such] is not like something else; and consideration of the categories which compel the mind – their number and their aspects’.⁵² Al-Fārābī delimits five categories of the constraints of reason: the constraints of categorical assertions by demonstrable proof; the constraint of debate; the constraint of sophism; the constraint of discursive poetics; and the constraint of discourse.⁵³ And all of these categories are structured according to syllogisms,⁵⁴ and syllogisms consist of premises or statements, and premises consist of individual discreet intelligibles or intelligible.⁵⁵ Hence, the component parts of logic consisted of eight, each of them in a book, and they are: categories; expressions; syllogisms (analogies); debate; sophism; rhetorical discourse and hypotheses,⁵⁶ and al-Fārābī asserts that the eight parts are not all intended within logic, or even if they were, it would not be the primary intent but only because it would be useful and connected with ‘the greatest intent of the art of logic – which is – to depend on *demonstrable proofs* [al-barāhīn]’.⁵⁷

From this standpoint, the *Posterior Analytics*, which is the fourth volume among the parts of logic, 'is the most advanced in prestigious leadership' or even 'logic was seeking in the primary intent, the fourth part; and the rest of the parts were in the service of the fourth'. Thus, the three parts at the beginning of the *Posterior Analytics* studying postulates and expressions and syllogisms are 'preambles, prefaces and paths towards it'. As for the next four, they entail studying debate, sophism, rhetorical discourse and hypotheses and are used as instruments for the fourth, so cognising the categories of postulates that they exhibit are utilised to distinguish between them and the postulates of proof so that nothing will be taken as a proof if it is not (in fact) a proof. Furthermore, it is useful for one who desires to use the postulates which are studied for the purpose of debate or rhetorical discourse, and so on.⁵⁸

In all of the foregoing issues, if al-Fārābī was expressing the viewpoint of Aristotle, then we should keep in mind that the way he expressed himself also reflects the concerns of al-Fārābī himself and his intellectual concerns more than anything else. Therefore, we ought to emphasise the importance of proof/demonstration (*al-burhān*) and confirm that it is the fundamental and basic subject in logic. In fact, with the persistence of al-Fārābī that 'the greatest intent of the art of logic is to depend on proofs', he stresses a new attitude in the history of logic from the time of Aristotle up to his own, an attitude that strongly and consistently restores what was neglected or forbidden of logic during the Hellenistic era: that is, the *Posterior Analytics*. Al-Fārābī intends to overcome simultaneously the theological discourse of the *kalām* – the sophistic dialectical discourse – and illuminationist discourse – the discourse of 'resigned reason' – both of which were – in his view – behind the disruption of thought and society. He intends to overcome both through the discourse of 'universal reason': the discourse of 'the assertions that provide information on the required knowledge, whether employed by the person himself to derive what is required, or addressed to others or others address to him for the purpose of rectifying that which is required: in all of those cases, it intends to benefit the knowledge of certainty – *ilm al-yaqīn* [i.e., positivism] – which is the knowledge, in the first instance, that cannot be contradicted nor can a person refrain from it, nor can a person even believe that he is able to refrain from it, nor does doubt pertain to it or render it error nor can error erase it nor can it be distrusted or is it subject to blame in any way'.⁵⁹

These suppositions – the suppositions of 'universal reason' – benefit the positivism which imposes itself decisively on all, in this form of inexorable force, for it is based on 'proofs consisting of trustworthy axioms, necessary,

universal and primordial – whereby the ancient human beings arrived at certainty and whereby knowledge was acquired naturally’, [and] ‘it is similar to our affirmation that the whole is greater than the part and that the quantities of a like measure are of equal value of the one unit are equal and whatever resembles these axioms’ which are also called ‘the principles of sciences/knowledges’ because ‘it is from these which we begin proceeding towards the knowledge of the rest of theoretical existences the concern of which is to persist and not by the act of a human being’. Human reason ‘is potential intellect/reason in actuality when these precursors do not obtain, but if they occur for him then it becomes an efficient intellect/reason for him and a to retrieve it to derive what remains and this is the power [i.e., the power of the reason] which cannot err and through which it obtains these, rather all what it encounters among knowledges – it is trustworthy and certain and it other than it is not able to effect such.’⁶⁰

So human reason suffices *itself*. It does not require an origin which confers it from ‘outside’ to analogise through it whatever occurs, nor does it need ‘inspiration’ from ‘knowledge’ from here or there, nor a ‘master’ to transfer this knowledge to it. Rather, the human reason is self-sufficient because the ‘primary axioms’, namely the conceptual principles of the reasoning which constitute its existence ‘that it acquired naturally’ the principles ‘from which we begin’ and which initiate the process of proof, based on analogical evidential structures upon which we base – through its existence and reasons – the certainty of ‘positivism’. And the general principle governing these evidentiary processes is the principle of causality in association with the principle of identity. Hence, positivist knowledge was *the knowledge of causes*. And in addition to that, it is absolutely the most esteemed knowledge because it leads to the knowledge of the ‘First Cause’ and in particular the ‘best knowledge of the best of beings’,⁶¹ and this is wisdom – *al-ḥikmah*. Al-Fārābī says: ‘Wisdom is the knowledge of distal causes through which persists the existence of all other beings and the existence of proximal causes for things possessed of causes; therefore, if we are certain of its existence, we know its identity and modality, and even if it is various and multiple it is ranked in an ascending order to the one existence which is the cause of the existence of these things, which are distal or proximal. That one is the First in fact and it does not depend on anything else for its existence but is self-subsisting and self-sufficient, not benefiting from the existence of other than itself.’⁶²

Thus, starting from existing things of incident, and consequently the possibly existing, al-Fārābī presents this as a subject not requiring any proof because it is one of the two aspects of the purvey of the reason for

existence: the necessary and the possible. He posits necessary existence as the existence of first cause when there persists for it an existence: 'It is necessary that as a result of it the rest of existences exist, the existences of which are not due to the desire of the human being and his choice, upon which they persist – some of which are witness by the sense and others which are cognised through demonstration/proof [*al-burhān*].' As for the modality of the [derivative] existence of things from it: 'The existence of what exists from it is an emanation from its existence for the existence of a thing, and other than it is emanating from its existence [i.e., from the First Cause].' And, since the necessitator of existence is, by definition, one simple perfect thing devoid of all deficiencies, which does not require in his existence any matter or anything else, and since what does not consist of matter is, by definition, reason and a separate entity (a pure form of reason) what emanates from it is a simple unitary reason like it. And this first reason conceives of itself and a heavenly sphere emanates from it (an empyrean) of celestial bodies and souls, and it conceives of its principle (Allāh), and a secondary reason emanates from it, and thus emanation continues up until the tenth reason which generates the 'image' and the common primordial matter of all bodies (i.e., objects). This primordial matter that moves with the movement of the epicycle forms the four elements (water, air, fire and soil) that form the terrestrial bodies. Thus, when a body is constituted as such, the tenth reason emanates onto it the image that suits it, and this is why it is called: 'the image giver' or 'the efficient reason' and thus, this physical body takes a form appended to its material substance and becomes one of the terrestrial beings. In fact, the body of the fetus inside the womb of a woman for instance, the efficient reason emanates onto it the human soul (*al-nafs al-bashariyah*) when this body is ready to accept this soul (i.e., at the point of quickening), and this is how the human being is formed, and the same thing is the case for other beings.⁶³

It is thus that al-Fārābī connects in his philosophical system between logic and ontology, between nature and metaphysics, to confirm the unity of the universe and the interdependence of its parts and the beauty of its structure. Undoubtedly, 'wisdom' in this sense should be able to achieve unity of thought, and does thought seek anything other than order, coherence, unity and certainty? In fact, this comprehensive knowledge of all existing things and their sequence, interconnection and hierarchy is apt to assist also in achieving the unity of society, or even the construction of utopia envisaged by al-Fārābī of which 'its pieces are inter-connected and in harmony with one another, and organised by pre-empting/pre-posing

some and delaying/postponing others, so that it comes to resemble natural beings, and so that its hierarchy resembles that of existence which proceeds from the first and ends with the primordial matter or the elements, and its interrelation and harmony is similar to the interdependence of the various existing things and their harmony; and the one directing this city [i.e., disposing of its affairs] resembles the First Cause through which perish the remark of an things in exilence of all beings.' Therefore, 'each in this utopia needs to know the highest principles of existing things and their rank and [relative] happiness and the primary leadership of the utopia and the classes of its leadership, then, afterwards the commendable acts, which if done lead to bliss.'⁶⁴ And al-Fārābī adds: 'And the principles of existing things and their hierarchical categories and happiness, and the leadership of utopia is either conceived and cognised by the [reason of the] human being or imagined. And its conception is that its essences are depicted in the human soul as they exist in reality,' and this might be achieved through the art of proofs which is particular to philosophers. As for imagining it, it could be through 'picturing its archetypes, similitudes and resemblances in the human soul as well as things pertaining to it,' and this might be accomplished through what every sect deems suitable for its masses of followers: 'when the masses experience difficulties in comprehending these same things as they are in existence, they ought to obtain their knowledge of them from another angle, and this is through simulation/simile [*al-muḥākāt*], thereby, simulating those things for each sect or community through other things that are more readily cognizable for them . . . those who accord happiness a primacy, conceptually and who accept the principles as conceptual, and these are the rulers, and as for those for whom these things which are found conceptualised in their souls and who embrace and believe in them they are the believers.'⁶⁵

The rulers conceive of things as they are, and the believers imagine things and their concepts and similitudes in their psyches/souls, therefore, what religion decrees is exactly identical to what is proved by philosophy, just as the utopia simulates the order of the universe in its hierarchy and interdependence. Therefore, there is no contradiction between religion and philosophy as they both express a single reality. Philosophy expresses it as an expression of direct proof, whereas religion expresses it through archetypes and similitudes. The philosopher benefits from these through reason, namely the art of proofs which alone can elevate it to the degree of communicating with 'the reason in actuality'. As for the Prophet, he accepts it from the same source but through his imagination only, because 'it is not

impossible that a human being might be, if the power of his imagination has reached ultimate perfection, capable of accepting or receiving – while conscious – through the efficient reason the present and future particles or their similitudes among tangibles and accept the similitudes of separate intelligibles and the rest of noble existing things and to see them, and thus through what he encounters of intelligibles, have prophecy of divine things,⁶⁶ and from this standpoint, ‘it is the virtuous sect [*millah*] resembling philosophy. Just as philosophy subsumes theories and practice . . . so does the sect. The practical in religion has its universality in practical philosophy . . . and the theoretical views in the sect have their proofs in theoretical philosophy, but are conceived in the sect without proofs; consequently, the two parts constituting the sect are under the rubric of philosophy . . . so philosophy is that which provides proofs for what comprises the virtuous sect, thus, the royal profession that is commensurate with the virtuous sect is subsumed under the rubric philosophy.’⁶⁷

Philosophy, then, does not contradict religion, but it explains it intellectually. Indeed, it might occur that the people of the sect do not cognise that their religious sect ‘follows a philosophy’, or that it has paradigms similar to theoretical matters which are true in philosophy and have been substantiated by proofs. Rather, they have concealed this so that this *ummah* will suppose that the paradigms encompassed by this religious sect are the truth, and that they are the same theoretical matters themselves. So, if subsequently, for philosophy in the event that it is transmitted to them – the philosophy that pertains to this sect in quality – it cannot be assured that this sect will not come into conflict with philosophy and that subsequently its people will renounce and reject it. And the partisans of philosophy will renounce this sect [and its religion] unless they know that [the religion of] this sect has paradigms similar to philosophy. Once they perceive that it presents paradigms, they will not renounce it for what it is, but the followers of the religious sect will renounce the followers of this philosophy, and thus, neither the philosophy nor its partisans will attain to leadership over this sect or its followers. Rather, it will be rejected along with its partisans. And those who follow religious sects are few among the philosophers, nor will philosophy and its partisans be safe from great harm from this sect and its followers. Therefore, perhaps the partisans of philosophy may be compelled to renounce the followers of the sect for the purpose of their own safety, as long as they make sure not to renounce religion, *itself*, but only its followers. Rather, they renounce their thinking that religion is a contradiction of philosophy, and they

endeavour to expunge this thought by explaining to them that of which their religion consists is paradigms.⁶⁸

Political Implications of Epistemologies

The dream of al-Ma'mūn was a political dream but would the dream of the head of state be anything else? This dream expressed the orientation of this 'enlightened' caliph with his cultural policy of 'dialogue'. He had resorted to 'Greek' universal reason to support the religious 'rational', the Arab *bayān*, which ideologically underpinned his state, against Manichean gnosticism and the Shī'ite illuminationism. Al-Kindī went in the same direction, and fought the battle along three dimensions: the dimension of confronting Manicheanism and invalidating the suppositions of Hermetism, and that of spreading scientific knowledge which explains natural phenomena, atmospheric and terrestrial, and psychological phenomena through purely rational explanation, and the dimension of supporting the religious 'rational' of the Arab *bayān* through the scientific and philosophical products of universal reason, scientific and philosophical, so he 'combined in his categorisation between the fundamentals of Islamic law and those of reason',⁶⁹ confirming their oneness and complementarities. As for al-Fārābī, he had lived in completely different circumstances, those of the disintegration of the Islamic empire, so he tended in his philosophical discourse towards another direction: he lived in a community intellectually and socio-politically rent asunder, so he inclined towards logic and politics for the purpose of combining them in a holistic union, where the unification of thought and society and the unification of religion and philosophy are the most prominent of its manifestations. Hence, al-Fārābī had accomplished, in terms of the philosophical dream, what al-Kindī endeavoured to achieve in terms of theological debate and 'the informative assertion of what is reported'.

If we examine the discourse of al-Kindī and that of al-Fārābī from the perspective of epistemological bases, or the epistemological cognitive order, which establishes them, we would find them and single discourse, a new discourse on Arab-Islamic culture, connoting a new moment of the history of the formation of Arab reason. Arab-Islamic culture and Arab reason itself used to figure, before al-Kindī and al-Fārābī, as two completely different discourses: a discourse depending on the '*bayān*' borne originally through the Arabic language, which had its rules established by the 'pure' Arab-Islamic heritage, the linguistic sciences and the religious sciences, and

a discourse depending on 'illumination' claimed by the 'resigned reason' that was transferred into Arab culture from the ancient heritage and which occupied basic positions in Shī'ism and Sufism, alchemy and astrology and other related 'mystical' knowledge. Here, we are now before a new discourse, a discourse belonging with its concepts and scientific and philosophical theories to the naturalism and metaphysics of Aristotle, as partially restored by the philosopher of the Arabs, al-Kindī, the mechanisms and laws of which explain the art of logic, engendered by Aristotle, the first master, and restored entirely by al-Fārābī, the second master. It is the discourse of the 'universal reason' underpinned by a particular cognitive order of knowledge based on 'proof' (*al-burhān*), therefore we would call it here the epistemological cognitive order of the *burhān*.

But if we consider the two discourses, the discourse of al-Kindī and that of al-Fārābī, from the strategic orientation informing and guiding each of them, we will find them to be completely different, not only in terms of inclination but also in terms of content as well: al-Kindī was deficient in 'proofs' because he was predisposed towards [the system of indication of] *bayān* and engaged in responding to the system of illumination of *ʿirfān*. Thus, he neglected political philosophy as he used to practise philosophy in the service of politics, by which I mean that he utilised philosophy to support a prevailing politics – the politics of 'the state of reason,' – the *bayān* of the Mu'tazilah, that overshadowed it and employed it. As for al-Fārābī, he tended towards [the system of demonstration/proof of] *burhān* not for the purpose of promoting the *bayān*, as al-Kindī tried to do, but to surpass it on the basis that the *content* of the '*bayān*' are paradigms shared by the content of *burhān*. As for the *ʿirfān*, al-Fārābī had retained it, yet not as a primary source of knowledge but as a *result*. He had considered it not a substitute for proof, but rather a fruit of it. Thus, and under the pressure of the preoccupation with 'unity' that dominated al-Fārābī's thought, the unity of thought and the unity of society, Abū Naṣr had attempted to practise politics in philosophy. He combined Plato and Aristotle for the purpose of establishing the unity of reason, and between religion and wisdom for the purpose of establishing the unity of society. Nevertheless, it was not possible for the process of this double 'combination' to be achieved without employing some aspects of Hermeticism. Proclaiming the unity of religion and philosophy and the intercommunication of beings from the apex of the pyramid (i.e., the First Cause) to the base (i.e., the four elements), this assertion upon which al-Fārābī founded his political and philosophical dream falls into the grip of Hermeticism, and it directly entails the assertion of the possibility of traversing the pyramid from the lowest level to the highest, in

both the material and spiritual spheres, and from this standpoint, there was 'alchemy' on the one hand, and 'illumination' on the other, and both are among the primary foundations of Hermeticism as we have previously seen. As for alchemy, al-Fārābī composed a treatise entitled *Wujūb Šinā'at al-Kīmiyā* (*The Necessity of the Art of Alchemy*), and this title is self-explanatory and requires no comment. As for *irfān*, despite the fact that al-Fārābī does not consider it as the point of departure and the beginning, he accepted it as a product and an end, when he brought an end to the epistemological cognitive order of the *burhān*, at its highest levels in 'communication' with 'reason in actuality'; the last and highest ranking reason in the hierarchy of supernal intelligences, emanating from the First Cause (i.e., God).

It is obvious that the establishment of 'universal thought' within Arab-Islamic culture was not a simple task: this culture was shared between two contradictory epistemological cognitive orders associated with two historically competing ideological trends: the system of indication of *bayān* and Sunni ideology on the one hand, and the illuminationist system of *irfān* and Shī'ite ideology on the other. Thus, the system of evidentiary demonstration/proof of the *burhān* within Arab-Islamic culture would be governed, in its nature and evolution, by this conflict between the '*bayānī*' and the '*irfānī*,' as we will clarify in the following chapter.

Notes

1. See Chapter 8.
2. Al-Shahristānī, *Al-Milal wal Niḥal*, pp. 116–117.
3. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist*, p. 243.
4. Fārūq 'Umar, *Al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī wa Fikr al-Qarn al-Isrīn* (Beirut: the Institute of Arab publications, 1980), p. 126.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
6. The term *ghulāt* related to those who exaggerated glorifying their Shī'ite imams by according them divine characteristics. See below.
7. Massignon means by the three spiritual models, the model of Muḥammad, the model of 'Alī and the model of Salmān al-Fārisī, depicted as historical figures. And they symbolised them with the first initials of the represented historical figure, such as A for 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, and the followers of this model would be called the 'A's. As for the 'M' it is the symbol of Muḥammad the Prophet and those who follow his priorities as a model would be called the 'M's. And finally, the S was the symbol of the model represented by Salmān al-Fārisī and those who follow his priorities would be called the 'S's. And they allege that Salmān was the one who brought the Qur'ān for Muḥammad and that 'Gabriel' was only the name with which Salmān was called as he was the transmitter of the divine vocation . . . etc. See the study of Massignon on Salmān al-Fārisī, in Salmān 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Shakhṣiyāt Qaliqah fī al-Islām* (Kuwait: The Agency of Publications, 1978).
8. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
9. Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī, *Al-Šilah bayna al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Tashayyuf* (Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), p. 126.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 181. See also *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī, pp. 69–70.

11. Henri Corbin, *The History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 92.
12. Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī, op. cit., pp. 183–184.
13. Fārūq ‘Umar, op. cit., p. 115.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibn al-Nadīm, pp. 175–176.
16. Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn*, pp. 304 and 321.
17. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (Beirut: Khayyāt library), p. 126.
18. Ibn Taymīyah, *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, p. 242. Referred to by al-Sāmī al-Nashshār: Nash‘at al-Fikr al-Islāmī, pp. 238–239.
19. See details in Bernard Lewis, *The Fundamentals of Ismā‘īlism*, Khalīl Aḥmad Ḥilū and Jāsīm Muḥammad al-Rajab, publications of al-Muthannā library in Baghdad.
20. ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1973), p. 16. And in particular the Qarāmīṭah movement and their state, see also Michael Ban Di Khuih, *The Qormuts*, Ḥusnī Zaynah (Beirut: Dār Ibn Khaldūn, 1978).
21. Al-Qiftī, *Akhhbār al-‘Ulamā’ Mukhtaṣar al-Zuzanī*, p. 221.
22. Carl Heinrich Becker, The Heritage of the Earlier Scholars in the Orient and the West in the book of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Al-Turāth al-Yūnānī fī al-Ḥaḍārah al-Islāmīyah*, p. 11.
23. We have transmitted these texts from the preface written by ‘Arīf Tāmīr in *Risālat Jāmi‘at al-Jāmi‘ah* of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥayāt, 1970), pp. 11–14.
24. See our opinion on the ideological content of the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity in our *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*, p. 220, first edition, 1982.
25. Al-Qiftī, op. cit., p. 40.
26. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist*, pp. 242–248.
27. Ṣā‘id al-Andalusī, *Ṭabaqat al-Umam*, p. 66.
28. Paul Kraus, The Aristotelian translations attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Al-Turāth al-Yūnānī* . . . pp. 101 ff.
29. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Dirāsāt wa Nuṣūṣ fī al-Falsafah wa al-‘Ulūm ‘inda al-‘Arab* (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing, 1981), p. 8.
30. Paul Kraus, ‘Aristotelian Translation’, p. 118.
31. Ibn Abū Uṣayba‘ah, *Uyūn al-Anbā’ fī Ṭabaqāt al-Atibbā’* (Beirut: Publications of Dar Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1965), pp. 604–605.
32. See Meirhoff, ‘From Alexandria to Baghdad’, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Al-Turāth al-Yūnānī*, p. 44.
33. It is clear that we are here utilising the words ‘universal reason’ as a translation of ‘Raison Universelle’ intending it as the intellectual power particular to human beings which enables a person when employing it adequately to acquire knowledge, and ultimately in the sense that it is common among all people and necessary in the sense that it imposes itself and does not leave room for assumptions and scepticism and absolutism in the sense that it is constant and does not vary with time and space. This recognition is based on the principle of identity and the non-contradiction and principle of causation. And we use here the term ‘universal mind’ instead of ‘absolute reason’ to avoid confusion which might result in the abandonment of the reason to the meaning given to the concept of ‘the absolute reason’ by the Neo-Platonism which is a separate intellectual being ranked second after the One, namely the second God or the maker. And the term ‘the ultimate reason’ was utilised in this sense in the Islamic philosophy.
34. See the list of the book of al-Kindī and his letters in *Akhhbār al-‘Ulamā’* by al-Qiftī, p. 368; see also the *Fihrist* by Ibn al-Nadīm, p. 255.
35. See the text of al-Kindī on the mind, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Rasā’il Falsafīyah*

li-l-Kindī wa al-Fārābī wa Ibn Bājjah wa Ibn ʿUday. Dār al-Andalus. And the same letter was previously published in: *Rasāʾil al-Kindī al-Falsafīyah* by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Hādī Abū Rīdah.

36. Al-Kindī, *Al-Falsafah al-Ulā, Rasāʾil al-Kindī al-Falsafīyah*, reviewed by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Hādī Abū Rīdah (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1950), p. 155.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

38. Al-Kindī, *Risālat Kamiyat Kutub Aristotales*, *ibid.*, p. 373.

39. Al-Kindī, *ibid.*

40. Al-Kindī, *Al-Ibānah ʿan al-ʾIllah al-Fāʾilah al-Qarībah li-l-Kawn wa al-Fasād*, p. 215. Also see his evidences on the finitude of the galaxy and time and movement and consequently the existence of the world, pp. 114 and 201.

41. Al-Kindī, *Al-Ibānah ʿan Sujūd al-Jurm al-Aqṣā*, *ibid.*, pp. 244–245.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 246–247.

43. Al-Kindī, *Al-Falsafah al-Ulā*, p. 102.

44. Ṣāʿid, *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam*, pp. 70–71.

45. See our study on al-Fārābī and his political philosophy in *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*.

46. Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, p. 712.

47. Ṣāʿid, *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam*, pp. 70–71.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʾUlūm*, reviewed by ʿUthmān Amīn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Angelo al-Miṣrīyah, 1968)

50. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 69–71.

52. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Alfāz al-Mustaʿmalah fī al-Mantiq*, reviewed by Muḥsin Mahdī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), p. 96.

53. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʾUlūm*, pp. 79–84.

54. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Alfāz*, p. 100.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

56. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʾUlūm*, pp. 87–88.

57. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Alfāz*, p. 99

58. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʾUlūm*, pp. 89–91.

59. Al-Fārābī, *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80.

60. Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl Muntazaʿah*, reviewed by Fawzī Mitri al-Najjār (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971), pp. 50–51.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–54.

63. Al-Fārābī, *Ārāʾ Abl al-Madīnah al-Fādilah* (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1959), p. 38, and also the first chapter of his book *al-Siyāsah al-Madanīyah al-Fādilah* also our presentation of the philosophical systemisation of al-Fārābī in *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*, p. 142, second edition 1982.

64. Al-Fārābī, *Al-Siyāsah al-Madanīyah*, reviewed by Fawzī Mitri al-Najjār, Beirut 1964, pp. 84–86.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

66. Al-Fārābī, *Ārāʾ Abl al-Madīnah al-Fādilah*, p. 94.

67. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Millah*, reviewed by Muḥsin Mahdī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), pp. 46–47.

68. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Hurūf*, reviewed by Muḥsin Mahdī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1970), p. 155.

69. Al-Bayhaqī, *Tatimmat Siwān al-Ḥikmah*, Lahore edition AH 1351, p. 25. Mentioned by Abū Rīdah in his preface to the letters of al-Kindī, p. 58.

CHAPTER 11

The Crisis of Fundamentals and the Fundamentals of the Crisis

The Syntax and Incompatibility of Epistémès

We indicated in the introduction to the third chapter of this book one of the ‘defects’ of language, a defect that has compelled us to expound upon some basic issues which we have yet to thoroughly settle clearly, and we asserted at that time that this ‘defect’ would accompany us until the end of our discourse, because language, or rather *thought*, cannot express its content except through time or in a sequential pattern; this makes the whole (*al-kull*) the theme of the discourse necessarily disintegrate (into its primary components) in accordance with the occasions in which it occurs. Discourse cannot be, or at least cannot be deemed consistent, unless put within a certain pattern and order; consequently it entails some types of pre-positioning (*taqdīm*) and post-positioning *ta’khīr* (deferment) of the components of its theme regardless of how intertwined, overlapping and concurrent they are; where such *taqdīm* and *ta’khīr* might be unnecessary for or even occasionally *incompatible* with the nature of a particular theme. However, whether we are aware of this fact or not, we find ourselves compelled to pre-pose what ‘must’ be deferred and to postpone what ‘must’ be pre-posed in order for us to engage in discourse; namely, in order to be able to produce an informed discourse capable, with some degree of success or another, of holding together all the threads of its argument.

We have previously noted this observation upon finding ourselves in the process of defining several concepts even before settling matters that

might lay the foundations for such a definition, at least in the context of our own discourse. After having advanced in natural/chronological social time a long lapse of nearly two centuries, which is equivalent to the interval that separates between al-Fārābī and the inception of [the era of] ‘the codification and classification of knowledge’, here we now perceive the urge to return back to the very same beginning itself, the beginning of the Era of Codification which we consider – and we reiterate here – to constitute the referential framework of Arab reason. This perception of the need to regress in time is not provoked by our yearning to ‘compensate for a past already gone’, but, rather, it is dictated by what is imminent. The steps we have traversed so far on the path towards defining the components of Arab reason have led us to reach a point where it is impossible to proceed ‘forwards’ without a return ‘backwards’: it is the undulant time of Arab culture that demands that we shift between its ‘sequences’, to and fro, so that we might deduce its import and unravel the ‘history’ within it.

In the previous chapters, we have depicted the components of Arab culture by ascribing to them, in terms of discourse, some sort of a pattern, which we believe reflects the same pattern that used to govern it – not in the scheme of the historical fact, but in the context of Arab *cultural* time; at the same time, we are keen to establish a state of parallelism and symmetry between the two of them, depending – for that purpose – on the particularity of the nexus between what is ideological and what is epistemological within Arab culture *per se*. In conclusion, we have demonstrated how Arab-Islamic culture was based since the Era of Codification, the time in which the general cultural structure was shaped, upon three epistemological systems that coexisted with it and later became deeply ingrained in that culture and according to the following order: the epistemological order of explication/indication (*bayān*) which constitutes the ‘purely indigenous’ Arab-Islamic legacy (i.e., the language and religion as authoritative texts – *nuṣūṣ*); the epistemological order of illumination (*‘irfān*), which constitutes the sphere of irrationalism, or ‘resigned reason’, which stems from the heritage of Antiquity (basically Hermetism); and finally the epistemological order of inferential evidence or demonstration (*burhān*) that constitutes rationalism and rational sciences (especially Aristotelian). As we have clarified in the previous chapter, this last system was introduced late to Arab-Islamic culture after the concepts and mechanisms of the first two conflicting and rival systems had become deeply entrenched in it. Indeed, this system, that is, the system of inferential evidence and demonstration of the *burhān*, came to record a new moment in the history of this culture, the moment of the emergence of the *universal reason* for the first time in it.

In spite of the fact that the analysis has driven us, or maybe we have led it, towards the context of highlighting the complementarity and relations of interaction of ‘all’ aspects involved, we must acknowledge now that we have addressed some points and remained silent about others. It was not our choice; rather, we *had* to do so of necessity as it is not feasible to simultaneously ‘chronicle’ two opposite manifestations that repudiate one another: the manifestation of the ‘point of departure’ (*al-intīlāqah*) and the manifestation of ‘the crisis’ (*al-azmah*) in Arab reason. This is not only attributable to what we have previously indicated in that language compels us to pre-pose certain things and post-pose others, but it is also due, *a fortiori*, to the fact that what we term now as ‘the manifestation of the crisis’ in Arab reason could not have possibly ‘emerged’ and consequently been manifested, as such indeed, from the Era of Codification itself – despite being attributed to that specific time. It was incumbent for it to move forward with the paths and horizons opened by ‘the manifestation of the point of departure’ to the point where any further step forwards, in terms of discourse, would be impossible without returning several steps backwards. It was inevitable to arrive at the threshold of the ‘crisis’ where the period of the ‘point of departure’ ends, so that one might be able to ‘chronicle’ it, that is, to fathom its bases.

Indeed, at the conclusion of the previous chapter when we emphasised that the discrepancy between the strategy of al-Kindī’s discourse and that of al-Fārābī’s had posited us before the ‘threshold’ of a new crisis of fundamental bases in the Arab reason, undoubtedly, the reader might expect such a crisis to be deeper and more comprehensive from the first crisis of the *uṣūl* (fundamental) bases which had instigated the Era of Codification and that which obliged al-Shāfi‘ī to adopt the concept of *taqnīn al-ra’y* (the codification of opinion) and which inaugurated the series of endeavors in *al-tashrī‘ li-l-musharri‘* (legitimisation of the legitimiser)¹ within Arab-Islamic culture. So, let us regress in time in order to identify closely this ‘crisis’ upon which we are about to expound. Since the question, here, is related to a crisis before us, namely one subsequent to the stage of al-Kindī and that of al-Fārābī, the foundations of which, simultaneously, lie *behind* us – namely during the Era of Codification – our regression in time shall not obtain through consecutive interlinked steps, but rather through a back-and-forth movement in pursuit of diagnosing the ‘crisis’ which shall not – of course – lead us in the direction of the instauration of reason within Arab-Islamic culture as was the case before, but in the direction of analysing the crisis befalling Arab reason – the crisis of its *structure*.

While tracking the process of the instauration of ‘universal reason’ within Arab-Islamic culture (in the previous chapter), we found ourselves compelled to move directly from al-Kindī to al-Fārābī because the epoch of al-Fārābī, in relation to this process of instauration, was contiguous to the epoch of al-Kindī. And when we have expounded al-Fārābī’s great contribution to the same process, it was mandatory to present it thoroughly due to its systematic cast; consequently it was not possible to determine points of convergence and divergence between al-Fārābī’s and al-Kindī’s views; in the end, we found ourselves before two discourses flowing into the same common theme – that of ensconcing ‘universal reason’ in Arab culture, the strategies for which differ greatly – even to the degree of being mutually opposed to one another. Now, as we stand at the threshold of the ‘crisis’ – wherein we are guided directly by the Avicennian orientation of the philosophical order of al-Fārābī – as we shall demonstrate shortly, we deem it necessary to address what really links al-Fārābī with al-Kindī so that we may reach a ‘vantage point’ that enables us to observe in limpid fashion some aspects of the aforementioned crisis, particularly the Avicennian dimension of it.

Ibn Khallikān narrates:

And when he [al-Fārābī] arrived in Baghdad [circa AH 300, and some references cite AH 310], it was inhabited by the prominent sage, Abū Bishr Mattā bin Yūnus, who was a senior sheikh. And people used to acknowledge his mastery in the art of logic, and he had great repute and broad fame among them at the time; every day hundreds of those who practised logic would gather around him as he read the book of Aristotle on logic and dictated his glosses to his pupils; wherefore, seventy tomes were written [after him] on his interpretations; and not a single person possessed a knowledge such as his during that time. In his own writings, he employed the most graceful of sentences and genial of inferences; in his categorisations, he implemented simplification and annotation so as to make some erudite scholars of this art laud him by saying: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī would never have elucidated argotic idioms with plain utterances without having acquired such an art from Abū Bishr himself. And Abū Naṣr used to attend Abū Bishr’s sessions among his pupils, whereon he remained for a while until he determined to set out for the city of Ḥarrān where the Nestorian Christian authority Yuḥannā Ibn Ḥaylān dwelled; and he acquired some of the latter’s logic as well. Subsequently, he returned to Baghdad, studied disciplines of philosophy, assimilated knowledge from all of Aristotle’s books and steadily extracted their significances and identified their ultimate purposes.²

What concerns us in this text is *not* what it says about al-Fārābī – some researchers are sceptical about the supposition that he derived his knowledge from Mattā – but what it says about Abū Bishr, this Nestorian Christian

logician who came to Baghdad during the caliphate of al-Rāḍī (AH 322–329) and whom Ibn al-Nadīm described by saying: ‘he was the master of logicians in his time’ and that ‘he interpreted . . . the four books of logic *in toto* upon which people rely in their reading.’³ And among these four books was *Kitāb al-Burhān* (*The Book of Proof*), which was translated into Arabic for the first time by Mattā himself, as we noted in the previous chapter. So the matter, then, pertains to the school of Baghdad which maintained its allegiance to al-Maʾmūn’s cultural strategy that would later become characterised by its evident logical attribute with the presence of Abū Bishr Mattā. Indeed, from the times of Ḥunayn bin Isḥāq (d. AH 260), the Nestorian Christian physician whom al-Maʾmūn placed in charge of the *bayt al-ḥikmah* (the ambitious scientific endeavour and apparatuses known literally as the ‘House of Wisdom’), and who was largely favoured by al-Mutawakkil – despite the ‘Sunni coup’ – to be appointed by the latter as head of translators to supervise and revise their translations, this orientation would persist. Ḥunayn bin Isḥāq was succeeded by his son, Isḥāq bin Ḥunayn (d. AH 298), who lived under the caliphates of al-Muʿtamid, al-Muʿtaḍid and al-Muqtadir, and who was more inclined towards philosophy than his father who was inclined towards medicine, though the two collaborated in logic. Isḥāq was succeeded by Abū Yaḥyā al-Marūzī and Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Quwayrī, from whom Abū Bishr Mattā derived his knowledge, then by the latter’s pupil, Yaḥyā bin ‘Uday (d. AH 364), who learned from al-Fārābī as well and who excelled in logic, only to be hailed as the master of logicians after Mattā. He was followed by the logician Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (d. AH 391), who was hailed as well as the master of logicians during his time and who was a contemporary of Ibn Sīnā. Throughout all of these – from al-Maʾmūn to al-Qādir (AH 381–422) – the school of Baghdad remained an intellectual centre, loyal to al-Maʾmūn’s cultural strategy, which is primarily based on the logic and disciplines of Aristotle; and which was implemented, relentlessly and without any interruption, in the ideological war waged by the ‘Abbāsīd rule against Ismāʿīlism and its Hermetic-gnostic philosophy. From the time of al-Maʾmūn, the relation between politics and philosophy remained unchanged in Baghdad, despite the demise of the influence of the Muʿtazilah over the state affairs and the rise of Sunni influence in its place. The outcome was the materialisation of a logical Peripatetic school in the ‘Abode of Peace’ (i.e. Baghdad), a school that was committed to a logical discourse and which it endeavoured to disseminate in the Arab cultural arena.

What is the connection between this school of logic in Baghdad and the ‘crisis’ we are examining?

Firstly, we should reiterate that we are proceeding at an epistemological level determined by the relationship between the three epistemological systems that are actually competing and colliding with each other within Arab culture; consequently the ‘crisis’ to which we are referring in this context is the crisis of this relationship: ‘the crisis of the fundamental principles’ (*uṣūl*) within Arab-Islamic culture. Obviously, the nexus between Baghdad’s school of logic and this crisis is attributed to the fact that this school consecrated the epistemological system of inferential evidence within Arab culture, and as a consequence resulted in the collision between *al-burhān* (the system of demonstration by inferential evidence) and *al-bayān* (explication or indication). Here, it is incumbent on us that we identify some of the resultant manifestations emerging from this collision.

We have discussed earlier in a previous chapter (Chapter Four) that a debate had taken place in Baghdad in AH 326, at a *majlis* (salon) attended by Faḍl bin Ja‘far bin Furāt, the vizier of the caliph al-Muqtadir, between Abū Bishr Mattā bin Yūnus who was hailed as the master of logicians in Baghdad and between Abū Sa‘īd al-Sīrāfī, the prominent linguist, *faqīh* (jurist) and theologian. That debate epitomised the collision between the epistemological system of *al-bayān* (indication) as represented in the person of Abū Sa‘īd al-Sīrāfī, and the epistemological system of *al-burhān* (proof demonstration through inferential evidence) represented in the person of Abū Bishr Mattā. In the *majlis* attended by the aforementioned vizier, several scholars of the *bayān* convened, as well as Abū Bishr Mattā. The vizier addressed proponents of the Arab *bayān* by saying: ‘Would any of you be appointed to debate Mattā in the question of logic as he states that: “there is no way to discern between what is right and what is wrong; between truth and falsehood; between righteousness and evil; between evidence and suspicion; and between certainty and doubt except with what we have reaped from logic, what we have come to possess from implementing it and the lessons we derive from the one who brought it forth regardless of his rank and limits . . .” Abū Sa‘īd al-Sīrāfī came forth and he was one of the prominent members of the school of grammatical sciences and syntax [*naḥw*] in Baghdad which was headed by Ibn Sīrāj – the teacher of al-Fārābī in the Arabic language and his pupil in logic at that time – and rebutted Mattā’s contention, emphasising the independence of the Arabic language from Greek logic by claiming that it has its own logic: that is, its own syntax, just as Greek logic is the syntax of the Greek language. And, just as any given language does not correspond to other languages by means of its specific

characteristics in terms of its nouns, verbs, pronouns, syntax, word order, figurative speech, inflection, derivation, extenuation and its broadening and limitations, its poetics and prose', the criterion that governs any language is different from one language to another, and thus: 'if logic was founded by a man from Greece to reflect his own people's language and expressivity with all its relevant norms and characteristics, then, why should the Turks, Indians, Persians and Arabs be obliged to perceive [things] through such logic and deem it an adjudicator and arbitrator for and against their own matters?' Moreover, al-Sīrāfī rejects the idea that there is only one *modus operandi* to test connotations and thoughts, in a manner that makes some believe that logic resembles a balancing scale whereby right and wrong can be measured, due to the fact that: 'Not all matters in this world can be weighed, nay, there are matters that can be weighed, and matters that can be quantified, and matters that can be gauged, and matters that can be screened and matters that can be estimated, and if that is applicable to visible objects, it is thus to intelligible forms.'⁴

Evidently, al-Sīrāfī, here, negates the concept of 'universal reason' to a degree that reflects the collision between two distinct epistemological systems or *épistémès*. Therefore, the issue here is not a matter of difference in viewpoints, but considerably deeper than that: it is a matter of difference in the constituting essence lying behind these viewpoints of both al-Sīrāfī and Mattā, and this is what we shall attempt to elucidate in the second volume of this book when we examine the epistemological systems of *al-bayān*, *al-burbān* and *al-'irfān*, each as its own particular entity. For the time being, let us proceed with the historical analysis regarding this debate which had been considered, at that time, a triumph not only for al-Sīrāfī, but one for all syntacticians and *mutakallimūn* (theologians) over logicians and philosophers, namely, a victory for the *bayān* over the *burbān*. What added even greater value to the significance of this 'victory' was the timing of its occurrence – when logic had begun to pervade the milieu of syntacticians. For instance, Ibn Sirāj, who was al-Sīrāfī's contemporary, systemised a book about Arabic syntax and gave it the title *al-Uṣūl* (*The Fundamentals*), in which he 'constructed his categories according to divisions based on the jargon of the logicians' – which was deemed to be something of a contravention by grammarians of the time. This was one aspect; and, on the other hand, the 'victory' of al-Sīrāfī appears to have stifled logical and philosophical circles, not because Mattā had been actually 'defeated' but because his opponent al-Sīrāfī was not making an argument constructed on a basis that differentiates between a general aspect of logic

and a specific aspect of syntax. This can be clearly detected in later debates where we find al-Fārābī indicating – in many of his books – the relation between syntax and logic. Thus, if logic ‘contributes – to some extent – along with syntax in establishing rules that govern utterances’, still they ‘are distinct in that the study of syntax yields rules that govern utterances of a particular nation (*ummah*); whereas logic provides rules that govern utterances of all nations’, in addition to the fact that ‘for all the rules which the science of syntax provides in terms of utterances, logic will provide us with their analogues in terms of intelligibles’.⁵ Naturally, these ‘clarifications’ were not meant to settle the dispute between syntacticians and logicians, as the issue here pertains to something that is much deeper, to a matter attributed to a conflict between two epistemological systems, not merely a question of the relation between what is general and what is specific. Thenceforth, the dispute between syntacticians and logicians continued just as the debate concerning the nature of the relationship between these two disciplines continued. Among those who contributed to this debate was Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, who preserved for us the text of the aforementioned debate. Abū Ḥayyān wrote a treatise entitled *Mā bayna al-Mantiq wa al-Naḥw min al-Munāsabah* (*What there is Between Logic and Syntax of a Correlation*) as part of his book *al-Muqābasāt* in which he maintains that ‘Arabic syntax is an Arab logic, while logic is a syntax of reason’ (*naḥw ‘aqlī*).

We ought to mention here the book entitled *al-Burhān fī Wujūh al-Bayān* (*Demonstration in Aspects of Explication*), written by Abū Ḥusayn Ishāq Ibn Wahab (edited and published by Dr Aḥmad Maḥlūb at the University of Baghdad and erroneously published under the title *Kitāb Naqd al-Naṭh* [*On the Critique of Prose*] by Qudāmah bin Ja‘far). In light of the previous givens, especially the period in which it was written (circa AH 335), this book – which we shall address in the second volume – appears as an attempt to assume an eminent position within the Arab explicatory system of *bayān* reminiscent of that position held by Aristotle’s logical writings within the Greek inferential evidentiary system of ‘*burhān*’. It is a categorical and codified presentation for the system of explication, its tenets, forms and techniques.

However, the conflict or the collision between syntax and logic, and generally speaking between *al-bayān* and *al-burhān*, was not confined to the time of Mattā and al-Sīrāfī (the first half of the fourth century), rather, it had started from the beginning of ‘the instauration of the universal reason’ within Arab culture at the time of al-Kindī; many works of literature

cite the opposition of grammarians against ‘the Arab Philosopher’ (i.e., al-Kindī), among which was the following objection: al-Jurjānī mentions that ‘it has been reported that Ibn al-Anbārī said: al-Kindī, the philosopher, went to Abū ‘Abbās [al-Mubarrad or Tha‘lab] and said unto him: I find tautology (*ḥashw*) in Arabic language, so Abū ‘Abbās answered him: in which subject have you found that, he said: I see Arabs say: ‘*Abdullah qā’im*’ (lit., ‘Abdullah exists), then they say: *inna ‘Abdullah qā’im*’ [lit., verily ‘Abdullah exists], then they say: *inna ‘Abdullah la-qā’im*’ [lit., verily ‘Abdullah does exist]. The utterances are multiple but the meaning is one; then Abū ‘Abbās retorted that the meanings are different because the utterances are different: so saying ‘*Abdullah qā’im*’ is to predicate his existence; and saying *inna ‘Abdullah qā’im*’ is as an answer to a question; and saying *inna ‘Abdullah la-qā’im*’ is a response to a negation of that statement; ergo, the *utterances* are multiple because the *meaning* is multiple. He said: the philosopher was so perplexed that he did not find a means whereby to reply.’⁶ And there are some who trace the origin of this collision between Greek logic and the Arabic language back to the generation which preceded that of al-Kindī, and specifically to the time of al-Shāfi‘ī. In this regard, al-Suyūṭī cites in his book *Ṣawn al-Manṭiq wa al-Kalām ‘an Fannay al-Manṭiq wa al-Kalām (Safeguarding Speech and Discourse from the Arts of Logic (Sophistry) and Theology)* – this title has a reference to what we are about to discuss – that al-Shāfi‘ī stated: ‘Arabs became ignorant and differed only when they forsook the Arabic tongue and when they showed inclination to that of Aristotle’, then al-Suyūṭī adds: ‘And al-Shāfi‘ī was referring to what had transpired during the days of al-Ma’mūn concerning the createdness of the Qur’ān, and the denial of being able to see [God] and other innovations. He attributed that to a lack of knowledge in the Arabic language and its inherent order of rhetoric, such as meanings and explication *al-bayān*; and he gracefully summed up his opinion by saying: Arabic language is the language of the Qur’ān and *summah*, and to extract from this what is conveyed through the tongue of Greeks and the logic of Aristotle which is in one domain and the tongue of the Arab is in another domain. And the Qur’ān was not revealed nor was the *summah* except through the expressions of the Arabs and their conventions in discourse, debate, argumentation and deduction; and not through the expressions of the Greeks, and every nation has its own language and modes of expression.’⁷

Whether what is attributed to al-Shāfi‘ī in this text and what is attributed to al-Kindī in the previous one are true from the historical standpoint or whether they were *a posteriori* reports fabricated for the purpose of

imparting a basis among ‘authorities of the past’, what should draw our attention more is the *method* utilised by al-Suyūṭī to express the issue we are discussing: the issue of the collision between the *bayān* and the *burhān*. Hence, the issue is no longer perceived as an issue of a dispute between syntacticians and logicians, or a dispute as to whether syntax is concerned with utterances rather than meanings contrary to logic; in fact, the problem at hand has become one related to the difference of the ‘Arab mode of expression and its contingent conventions in dialogue, discourse, argumentation and deduction’ and ‘the modes of expression of the Greeks’. This expression reflects *ad verbum* the concept we term *épistémè*. And if al-Suyūṭī lived at a later stage of the history of Arab culture (the second half of the ninth century AH), this does not imply that awareness of ‘Arabic scholars’ of the dimensions of the distinction between Arabic syntax and Greek logic had also occurred late. Not at all; indeed, the criticism of Ibn Taymīyah (AH 661–728) of Greek logic, despite its overt ideological motives,⁸ reflects this awareness to the same profound degree, just as the responses of al-Sīrāfī to Mattā in the famous debate contain expressions that reveal similar recognition, despite their oratorical character.

Hence, if it is difficult to revert the distinction between ‘the Arabs’ mode of expression’ and ‘the Greeks’ mode of expression’ to the time of al-Shāfi‘ī or the time of al-Kindī due to the fact that Greek logic was not extant at that time in Arab-Islamic culture, as we have explained in a way that would allow for that cognisance to exist. There is no doubt that the prosperity of the school of logic in Baghdad during the time of Mattā, al-Fārābī, Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Uday and the logician Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, who was a ‘referential authority’ in logic and philosophy in Baghdad during the second half of the fourth century AH – a period that extends over an entire century starting with Mattā up until Abū Sulaymān – was that which crystallised this deep awareness in that this distinction between Arabic syntax and Greek logic exceeds the limits of the conflict between various disciplines and the differences between languages, to reach the very foundations of knowledge itself.

And if we perceive now the debate between al-Sayrāfī and Mattā in light of the previous observations on the one hand, and in light of al-Kindī’s attempt to succour the ‘religious rational’ through the by-products of the ‘Greek universal reason’ at the epistemological level, it means laying the foundations of ‘explication/indication’ (*bayān*) on the basis of ‘demonstration/proof by inferential evidence’ (*burhān*) on the other hand,

we can easily discover how the aforementioned debate was the occasion in which one of the most important aspects of the ‘crisis of fundamentals’ in Arab culture had erupted. Al-Ma’mūn’s strategy was based entirely on establishing the foundations of *bayān* on the basis of *burhān vis-à-vis* the illuminationism of *‘irfān*. Now this strategy had reached a stalemate. The outgrowth of the system of *bayān* and its subsequent crystallisation as a codified epistemological system on the one hand, and the complete introduction of Aristotelian logic into Arab culture via the translation of *Posterior Analytics* (a text from Aristotle’s *Organon* that deals with proof) and the subsequent shift towards studying the *burhān* (proof-oriented) nature within this logic – which had emphasised, in the process, its epistemological status as a uniquely distinct epistemological system – on the other hand, both had demonstrated the profound contradistinction between the systems of *bayān* and *burhān* and further demonstrated the unfeasibility of proceeding with attempts to establish the former on the basis of the latter without having to sacrifice what is substantial in one of them, or perhaps in both of them. This was one of the manifestations of the ‘crisis of fundamentals’ (*azmat al-usus*) in Arab culture, the crisis that began to unfold immediately after the end of the Era of Codification.

There are other manifestations of which we shall proceed now to identify and assess the dimensions.

Religious and Philosophical Incompatibilities

Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī cites that he presented some of the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*) to the logician Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (d. AH 391 or 400, according to other references) to know his opinion concerning them. A few days later, al-Sijistānī gave them back to him and said that they, namely the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā: ‘have striven but enriched not . . ., they have presumed what is not and what cannot be and what is not tenable: they presumed they could thrust philosophy . . . into *al-sharī‘ah* [Islamic law] and combine the two, and this intention is far-fetched. For there have been people before them who were even more ardent and more resourceful . . ., yet what they contrived did not transpire, neither did they reach the goal they anticipated’ (and perhaps he was referring to the Hermetic philosophy). The logician Abū Sulaymān attributes this to the difference between the *épistémè* that constitutes Islamic

sharīʿah from that which constitutes philosophy. He adds, according to the account of al-Tawḥīdī:

The *sharīʿah* comes from Allāh Almighty through the emissary between Him and creation by means of revelation, invocation, evidence provided by signs, and the presence of miracles which are perceived rationally at times, and metaphorically at others, for the general welfare and clear absolute directions; among which shall there be what is meant to be unresearchable and unfathomable, for such one has to accede to whatever it indicates in favour of doing and whatever it cautions against doing, and as such, questions such as “what for?” shall be dropped; “how?” shall be annulled; “would it be?” shall vanish; and “if” or “if only” shall be gone with the wind, since such issues are pre-determined *ab initio*, and so objections of dissidents are rejected; scepticism of sceptics is perilous and the unimpeachability of those who consent is beneficial. They tend to serve a good cause *in toto*, and their *ad hoc* interpretations depend on how well accepted they are. They are open to deliberation under circumstances involving what pertains to what is clearly manifest [*ẓāhir*]; protesting an accepted exegesis; propositions in common language; defence through a cogent argument; promotion of goodness; exemplars; one who refers to a clear inferential evidence and discerns between what is *ḥalāl* [admissible] and what is *ḥarām* [forbidden]; one who follows *athar* [prophetic traditions] and *khbar* [transmitted prophetic accounts] which are well-recognised by the *ahl al-millah* [people of the denomination] and unanimously agreed upon by *ummah* . . .; and involving not the discourse of an astrologist on the influence of the planets . . .; nor the discourse of a naturalist who tries to unravel nature’s mysteries . . .; nor an architect’s pursuit of measurements of matters . . .; nor a logician’s analysis for the soundness of statements . . . Ergo, how dare the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā independently to attempt to combine facts of philosophy with the *sharīʿah*?

Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī adds: ‘Abū Sulaymān says that philosophy is a duty [*ḥaqq*], however, it has nothing to do with the *sharīʿah*; likewise, the *sharīʿah* is a duty but has nothing to do with philosophy. And the lawgiver of the *sharīʿah* is an emissary, and the philosopher is an emissary for himself; one of whom deals with revelation, whereas the other deals with his study; the first is sated and the second is ever-industrious . . .; and whoever wishes to philosophise, he ought to turn his eyes away from religions, and whoever chooses to become religious, he ought to strengthen his attention in philosophy, and be cognisant of both while the twain are placed separately in two different domains and modes; thus, with religion he will seek closeness to God Almighty in light of what is instructed to him by the giver of the *sharīʿah* on behalf of God almighty, and with wisdom he will witness the power of God Almighty in this world that -

bedazzles the eye of every beholder and mystifies the mind of every contemplator; in the end, religion and philosophy need not undermine one another.’ As Abū Sulaymān emphasised the way the Qurʾān invites people to contemplate and utilise their own reason, he points out that such a malady – and he means by that the negative reactions against philosophy that occurred in Islam – had been contracted by ‘those apostates of the *dabrīyīn* [those who denied the existence of a creator and asserted that the world and everything in it returned to its original state as part of a cycle] who went astray in debate and ignorance [...] among whom were Šāliḥ bin ‘Abd al-Quddūs and Ibn Abī al-‘Arjā’ and Maṭar bin Abī al-Ghayth and Ibn al-Rāwandī and al-Šayram – and it is very well known that those people were accused of being heretics [*zindīq*], propagating Manicheism, opposing the doctrines of Islam and denying the prophecy of the Prophet Muḥammad.’ After Abū Sulaymān holds them responsible for the negative reactions against philosophy in Islam by the Sunnis, he resumes his attack: ‘those who had commingled philosophy with religiosity and associated this with that by dichotomies of *ẓāhir* [manifest] and *bātin* [hidden/esoteric], occult/overt, pellucid/surreptitious’,⁹ the very things that could be applied to the Ikhwān al-Šafā and consequently to Ismā‘īlism.

If the debate between al-Sīrāfi and Mattā recorded the violent collision that occurred between *bayān* and *burhān* at the level of the relation between Arabic syntax and logic during that time, then the observations of the logician Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī with regard to the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity and his diatribe against Ismā‘īlism again records the violent collision that occurred between *burhān* and ‘*irfān*’ at the time. Moreover, if the position taken by Abū Sulaymān, who was held to be the master of the school of logic in Baghdad in his time, reasserts the commitment of this school to al-Ma’mūn’s cultural strategy which intended to reinforce *bayān* through *burhān* as opposed to ‘*irfān*’, it also records a new moment in the evolution of the relation between *bayān* and *burhān*. Al-Kindī’s discourse, which was part of the same strategy, as we depicted in the previous chapter, faced two estranged rivals, or in other words, it was directed against two kinds of opposition each of them rival to the other: the ‘esoteric’ opposition and the Sunni opposition. Therefore, he had to employ *burhān* against the first opponent while at the same time attempting to emphasise its non-contradiction with the ‘religious rational’, hence inclining towards the establishment of *bayān* on the basis of *burhān*; this attempt was followed by al-Fārābī’s even more audacious philosophical dream, in which he decided that ‘what is in religion may serve as a prototype for what is in philosophy’.

In the context of the logician Abū Sulaymān, the whole matter is different, and therefore requires a new strategy or at least an addendum to the original

strategy. The explosion of the silent crisis from which continued to suffer previous attempts that were made to establish the *bayān* on the basis of *burhān*, and which had manifested itself clearly in the debate between al-Sayrāfī and Mattā, had made it impossible to continue the reconciliation between the two without having to sacrifice one of them, and therefore the separation between them had then become inevitable. Ideologically, the separation between *bayān* and *burhān* means the separation between religion and philosophy, thereby achieving a new kind of reconciliation between them since this segregation will result in having philosophy admit the independence of religion and its right in it; this segregation involves relinquishing al-Fārābī's philosophical dream concerning the containment of religion by philosophy on the grounds that 'the opinions that are shared within the *millah* [denomination] have their proofs in the theoretical philosophy'. And on the other hand, the call for the separation between religion and philosophy serves their common case (*al-bayān* and *al-burhān*), their *ideological* case as it directly tends to smash the underlying formative strategy of Ismā'īli ideology: the strategy of combining philosophy with religion and its political implications.

The logician Abū Sulaymān probably was not aware of the full dimensions of his call, the call for the separation between religion from philosophy and philosophy from religion, as it initiates, or *could* launch, a new philosophical discourse moving precisely into a new future strategy, as we will find with Averroes (Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin Rushd). That being said, however, he must have been entirely aware that his call was part of the struggle escalating during his time, not between logicians and syntacticians as was the case before, but between 'Easterners [of the Orient]' (*al-mashriqīyīn*) and 'Westerners [of the Occident]' (*al-maghribīyīn*) according to Avicenna's terminology, where this latter belonged to the second group while Abū Sulaymān was the head of the first. As we will see in the following section, the struggle epitomised – as well – one of the phenomena of the 'crisis of fundamentals' in Arab culture, one which is more profound and of a greater scale.

Ibn Sīnā's Philosophy

Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) asserts in his letter of introduction to his book *al-Mubāḥathāt* (*The Dialogues*) which contained his responses to philosophical questions posed by one of his prominent disciples and followers,¹⁰ that

was authored during later years of his life: ‘The things he mentioned¹¹ on the disagreement of people concerning the issue of the soul and reason, and their indifference and reluctance on this issue, especially among those naive Christians from the “City of Peace”, indeed, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius were confused about this section, and each was correct on one issue and wrong on another, and it is attributed to their confusion in understanding the logician’s discipline . . . and in this context, I have composed a book I have called *Kitāb al-Inṣāf* [*The Book of Equity*], in which I have classified scholastics under two categories, Orientals and Occidentals, and I posited Orientals in juxtaposition to Occidentals so that I might impart equity between the two rivals.’ Additionally, Ibn Sīnā tells us in the same letter that he lost this book when it was just a draft, ‘in some defeats’¹² and that ‘it included summaries about the weaknesses and negligence of the Baghdad school’.

Also, in an introduction of a book of his which has only reached us so far along with a part of it on logic and was published as *Manṭiq al-Mashriqīyīn* (lit., *The Logic of Orientals*),¹³ Ibn Sīnā writes the following: ‘And more, our motivation inclined us to combine discourses on the things upon which researchers have been in contravention, where we are not tempted by tribal fervour or whim or habit or habitude, nor do we care for transcending what was customarily written by the scholars of Greek books which was due to negligence and a lack of comprehension, or to what we have written in books dedicated for masses of pseudophilosophers and would-be Peripatetics, those who believe that God had bestowed his guidance and mercy on them exclusively’, those who adhere to imitating Aristotle fervently so that they were not capable of ‘treating what is transferred from the ancients as being insufficient, flawed and incomplete’. Then Ibn Sīnā adds: ‘It is easy for us to comprehend what they said for we have worked on it, and it is not a remote idea that the origins of some knowledge that has reached us are non-Greek, and the time when we have worked on these things was an early period, and we have discovered, with God’s help, a factor that shortened the time for comprehending the knowledge that came to us; then, we compared all that with the kind of knowledge termed *logic* by the Greeks, and we do not categorically reject the idea that for the Oriental it may have had a literally different name, so we traversed among what is synonymous and what is not, and we set forth a determination for each, as a result, what was right was right and what was false was false.’ And afterwards, he notes that he had composed books where he acted in agreement with the Peripatetics, the followers of Aristotle, completing what they had omitted and correcting what was

‘confusing’ for them, retaining for himself the truth he had ‘discovered’ since the beginning of his work in science, reviewing and revising it ‘especially in things pertaining to major purposes and ultimate goals’. Subsequently, he notes: ‘And since this is the issue and the case is as such, we found it convenient to compose a book containing the sources (lit., ‘mothers’) of true knowledge which we have derived from those who had contemplated thoroughly and pondered considerably and it was not far from a good sense of intuition . . . and we have not composed this book to deliver it for the public but for us only, I mean for those among us who represent themselves. As for the masses who were engaged in this practice, we have given them a great deal in *Kitāb al-Shifā’* [*The Book of Healing*] and even more than what they needed,¹⁴ and in the introduction of *Kitāb al-Shifā’*, we read the following: ‘Our goal in this book, which we hope that time will permit us to complete, and may Allāh’s aid be bestowed upon us in composing it, is to present what we have identified from the fundamentals of philosophical knowledge attributed to antiquity.’ He also noted his intentions to write another book with a title *al-Lawāḥiq* (*Annotations*), in which he would provide explanations for *Kitāb al-Shifā’*, adding: ‘and I have a book other than these two books where I have presented philosophy as it really is and as required by overt opinion which does not take into account collusion in the art, and which does not avoid those who contradicted them like others, it is my book on Oriental Philosophy. As for this book – *Kitāb al-Shifā’* – it is easier and more supportive to those of Peripatetic inclination. And whoever sought a truth bereft of jargon, he has to ask for this book, and whoever sought a fact in a manner to satisfy compatriots and for oversimplification, he will be spared the other book, but will have this current book.’¹⁵

These texts that we have employed in a special study on ‘Ibn Sīnā and his Oriental Philosophy’¹⁶ place us in the midst of the struggle that had erupted during the fourth century AH between the ‘Orientals’ as referred to by Ibn Sīnā and of whom he speaks on their behalf, and those he termed the ‘Occidentals’ by whom he means, as is obvious from the first text, the logicians of Baghdad of whom we have spoken about in the preceding section. So what is the subject of this struggle, what are the solutions provided by Ibn Sīnā and what is the relation of all this to the ‘crisis of fundamentals’, the main theme of this chapter?

If the ‘Occidentals’ were the logicians of Baghdad who were protected under the aegis of the ‘Abbāsīd state as we have noted in the foregoing, and if the ‘Orientals’ were the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā and the Ismā‘īlī philosophers and their followers in addition to the fundamentals of this

philosophy as we will indicate later, this reverts us immediately to the historical struggle between the 'Abbāsid state and its Sunni ideology on the one hand, and the Ismā'īli trend and its esoteric philosophy on the other. Therefore, the philosophical conflict between 'Orientals' and 'Occidentals' at the time of Ibn Sīnā was in fact an extension of this 'abstract' struggle itself at the intellectual level. As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, this political struggle was expressed philosophically through the violent attack by the 'Occidentals' led by the logician Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī on the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity and other 'Oriental' philosophers such as al-Balkhī and al-Naysābūrī and al-ʿĀmirī because they allegedly intended to 'infiltrate philosophy . . . into the *sharī'ah* and to combine *sharī'ah* and philosophy', that which could directly challenge the Ismā'īli ideology itself. As for Ibn Sīnā, he intended to avoid this direct confrontation which might have depicted him as a defender of Ismā'īlism and its philosophy; therefore, he moved the struggle to its epistemological foundations, to the issue of knowledge and its instruments and precisely to decide upon which one should be adopted as the 'proper' instrument for cognisance – reason or the soul? Therefore, we find Ibn Sīnā attacking 'Occidentals' – just as we have seen previously – because of what he called 'their laziness and their reluctance' in comprehending the issue of 'the soul and reason', associating that with what he terms the 'confusion' of Alexander and Themistius and other interpreters of Aristotle before 'their confusion in the logician's discipline' concerning the soul and its immortality. Thus, exactly what is the position of Aristotle and what are the glosses of his interpreters? Further, what is the solution suggested by Ibn Sīnā to this problem?

Aristotle considers the soul 'the first perfection' of the body, namely its essential form and its first act, precisely like the visual acuity of the eye: thus, just as there is no sight without the eye, similarly there are no acts of the soul without a body. Therefore the soul is not independent from the body, but on the contrary, the body is its foundation. As for reason, it is one of the powers of the soul and is a mere *potentiality/readiness* before causes start occurring in it, and it becomes an agent active reason (intellect) if these occur in it. And in order to transpose reason from its state of potentiality to the state of action, there must be an intervention by other powers of reason, according to the principle of Aristotle which requires that nothing pass from potential force to action except through something else. Further, Aristotle hesitated in determining the identity of this mental power, which drives reason from potential to action, thus, sometimes he considered it an eternal detached reason and at other times he denies it has character. In any case, saying that this potential power is

transcendental in terms of reason and considering it eternal (that is the agent/active reason) was mentioned haphazardly in the context of his analysis to the process of cognisance.¹⁷ The interpreters of Aristotle were greatly preoccupied with this issue but without touching on the nature of the relation between the soul and the body as determined by Aristotle. Thus, Alexander of Aphrodisias sees that 'the soul is the image of the body; the image and the *hyle* have no transcendental existence, and all the functions of the soul are interrelated with the organic modifications, thus, the soul is part of the body, and therefore the hylomorphic reason (which is a mere potential/readiness of reason) is corruptible with the corruption of the body is, whereas the effective reason, as it renders physical forms cognisable, has to be reasonable, for it is transcendental and not a part of the soul, yet, it influences the soul from without; it is God, the First Cause.' As for Themistius, he considered that the arguments which dictated that the agent/active reason [intellect] be detached/transcendental dictate also that the detached/transcendental reason (the hylomorphic reason) be considered reasonable, so both reasons are one sole transcendental entity subjoined to all human beings.¹⁸

Ibn Sīnā adopted an entirely different doctrinal orientation; he adopted Hermetic theory based on the consideration that the soul was an essence independent of the body, and that it was, originally, part of the supreme transcendental God, implanted by God the Maker inside the human body, where it stayed for a term in that body, so if it were subject to the process of 'purification' it would revert to its divine origin (see Chapter Eight). Ibn Sīnā adopted this theory and defended it in most of his books, and endeavoured widely to prove the existence of the soul and that it is a spiritual, independent essence; that it is transcendental and eternal; and that it had fallen to the human from a 'higher position', he perceives the human being as 'something other than this physical tangible body' but it is the soul referred to by every person when saying 'I' (i.e., the ego). And that this 'ego' is 'not a body and non-physical, it is a spiritual essence that had emanated into this form [the body], enlivened it, held it as an instrument in the acquisition of cognisance and knowledge until fulfilling its substantial essence so that it knows its god and realises the truths of its knowledge; thus, it prepares itself to reunite with God's presence and becomes one of his angels in an infinite bliss.' Ibn Sīnā adds: 'and this is the inclination of the theologians and monk scholastics; and a group of monastic [spiritual] practitioners and illuminationists have agreed for they have seen their own essences when they eschewed their bodies and communed with the divine lights', then he immediately continues: 'and we have evidences

for the truth of this inclination in terms of research and perception', mentioning after this that they are in general the evidences that we can find in his other books such as *al-Shifā'* and *al-Najāt* (*The Book of Salvation*).¹⁹

The issue is then related to proof 'in terms of research and theory', namely, to logic and reason according to the 'inclination of the theologians and scholars of divinity . . . and the monastic practitioners [of spiritual exercises] and proponents who adopt *kashf* [disclosure] as means for knowledge'. In other words, Ibn Sīnā intends to found *'irfān* on the basis of *burhān*. And, if the previous text is abstracted from a letter written by Ibn Sīnā in his youth,²⁰ his book *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* (*Remarks and Admonitions*) which is one of his later works, restores the initiative of 'the bloom of modernity' in a 'deeper' and broader form. Ibn Sīnā had based this book on ten methods of logic and ten forms of *al-ṭabī'iyāt* (lit., natures) and *al-ilāhīyāt* (lit., divinities), but he was not committed to the scientific distribution of the issues of these sciences (logic, natural sciences and theology). He considered logic as a mere instrument and confused natural science with theology – as noted by the interpreters of the book such as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī²¹ – in a manner making them posit the '*'irfān*' presented in 'the eighth mode' under the rubric of enjoyment and happiness meaning 'sublime bliss' (*al-ladhah al-ʿulyā*) that can be achieved by, as he says: 'pure and illumined knowers, if they have abandoned the filth of bodily comparison and avoided other preoccupations and have become devoted to the world of holiness and bliss and imbibed the supreme perfection'.²²

The issue here is not related to just 'mental mysticism/Sufism' (*al-taṣawwuf al-ʿaqlī*) as they say, but Ibn Sīnā adopts Hermetism entirely, including mysticism and its esoteric knowledge of sorcery. Thus, in the last pages of his book he writes 'Perhaps, you might hear accounts which are out of the ordinary about illuminationists [*'irfānīyīn*], so you rather deny them. Such as when you hear that an illuminationist invoked the sky to rain and it did, or that he invoked a wound to heal and it did, or that he imprecated certain people and they did suffer an earthquake or a tribulation, or that he made invocations for their safety so that illness or death or torrents or floods were kept from them, or that he unleashed a beast or bird of prey upon them, or such matters which could not be considered obviously impossible? So you must give pause and not be hasty, for such things have reasons in the secrets of nature . . . so you must not eliminate the fact that some souls have abilities that have influences beyond their bodies and therefore they would be considered, because of their power, as though they are some sort of soul for the world . . . so what he

says is in regard to the essential core of the soul, it becomes good, righteous and pure in and of itself – for such a one is possessed of a miracle among prophets or blessed ones or the ones who are holy men . . . and for whomever this occurs but then becomes evil and utilises it for evil, he is a despicable magician.’ Then he adds ‘an evil eye is almost the same thing’ as ‘strange things emanate in the natural world out of three principles: one of them is the previously mentioned psychological aspect [of the soul]; the second is the properties of elementary bodies such as the attraction of iron by a magnet through its particular force; and the third belongs to a supernal power, between it and between the amalgamation of terrestrial antagonist bodies distinguished by positive forms or between it and between terrestrial antagonist souls characterised by astrological active or reactive states, specific and subsequent to the occurrence of strange effects. And magic belongs to the first category; while miracles and auras of charisma and spells [*al-nīrnajāt*] belong to the second category; and talismans belong to the third category.’ And Ibn Sīnā ends his book with an advice and a final recommendation. Concerning advice, he says: ‘Beware of becoming sequestered from or absolving yourself of the common masses as that would mean that you defy everything, which would be reckless and irresponsible.’ In other words Ibn Sīnā claims that to believe in magic and spells (*al-nīrnajāt*) and talismans and the evil eye despite the ‘defiance’ (*anf*) of reason and logic. As for the final recommendation, he says: ‘I have churned in these admonitions, the cream of truth, and I have fed you rhymed proverbs in erudite words to preserve them from the trite and ignorant, and he who has not been granted sharp cleverness and the path and practice, and they who paid heed to the canaille or were of those apostates among philosophers and one of their riffraff . . .’²³

We will limit ourselves to these examples of ‘Oriental Philosophy’ mentioned by Ibn Sīnā, as they are sufficient so as to accord the texts we have mentioned in this paragraph their genuine meaning. Those who wish to acquire more examples of the same ‘philosophy’ will be obliged to return to his ‘Oriental’ letters.²⁴ Now, let us draw the inevitable conclusion.

Later on Orientalists would disagree about the translation of the idiom *tahāfut al-falāsifah* (lit., the *Incoherence of the Philosophers*) adopted by al-Ghazālī as the title of his famous book where he attacked philosophers in the person of Ibn Sīnā, so some have translated the word *tahāfut* in the sense of ‘collapse’ (*al-inhiyār*) and ‘fall’ (*al-suqūṭ*) and ‘destruction’ (*al-damār*) and some have translated it as the equivalent of ‘inharmo-

niousness' or 'incohesion.' However, Henry Corbin objects to these translations and sees that the word *tabāfut* as employed by al-Ghazālī rather indicates the meaning of 'self-destruction'.²⁵ Thus, the '*tabāfut*' of the philosophers means that they self-destruct of their own accord, namely that their philosophical rhetoric discourse contradicts itself (and implodes on its own). And we believe that the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā is a 'self-destructive' philosophy indeed, yet it is not as such because its partisan did not abide by the rules of logic in posing the issues related to it as accused by al-Ghazālī,²⁶ so they were untenable and contradictory – which Henry Corbin intended to express – but also, and in particular, because it is a philosophy of reason that had made its ultimate ambition to *resign*. The gnostic 'illuminationists' were followers of Sufism and Hermetism and others were 'logical' or logically *consistent* – with *themselves* as they embarked from the beginning from the premise of 'the inability of reason to reach the truth', therefore, they abandoned reason and logic and sought 'revelation through disclosure' (*kashf*) and 'communion' through '[spiritual] exercises' and 'purification', following the path of 'the resigned reason' from the beginning to the end, and they were 'free' to do so. The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, and later the Ismā'īlī philosophers, were in harmony with the principle they adopted in their struggle with the state which they intended to overthrow, the principle that 'the end justifies the means'; and this was when they employed the Hermetic religious philosophy and all of the products of 'the resigned reason' so as to possess the souls of people for the purpose of possessing their bodies.²⁷ They also preferred *irfān* over *burhān*, and they were 'free' in that as long as politics had 'imposed' such a choice. As for Ibn Sīnā, who is considered, with his philosophical encyclopedia *al-Shifā'* and its epitome *al-Najāt* along with his other works on science and logic, to be within the tradition of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī – a tradition of the establishment of 'universal reason' within the Arabic culture – nothing can justify the process of 'self-destruction' initiated by his Oriental philosophy that consecrated irrationalism in its various gradations and forms, especially his inverted philosophical awareness,²⁸ and consequently his surrender to Hermetism and its perception of the world through magic.²⁹

However, Ibn Sīnā was not the product of himself, but rather he was the result of the entire Arab-Islamic culture from its inception with the Era of Codification up until his time. Hereupon, with all his contradictions in his ambition and life journey, he marks the moment in which the self-contradiction of Arab reason explodes, a moment where the inability of Arab reason appeared clearly, up until his moment, to achieve a final

rupture with Hermetism and its epistemological system, the system of the ‘resigned reason’. Al-Ghazālī would come to establish the evidence of this assumption, not just with his inversions and contradictions and his intellectual crisis, but also through his adoption of Hermetism in the locus of *bayān* itself, establishing with that the crisis of Arab reason, as a ‘historical’ crisis.

We will leave the crisis of al-Ghazālī for a while and move to another manifestation of the ‘crisis of fundamentals’ that underlies it.

Ismā‘īli Ideology and Philosophical Initiatives

One of the paradoxes that draws attention concerning the history of the Ismā‘īli trend, which undoubtedly had a profound impact in its development and destiny, is that this trend succeeded *politically* where it failed *intellectually*, while it had achieved an intellectual success when its political failure was imminent. The Ismā‘īli movement had succeeded in establishing its state in the year AH 296 in Africa (Tunisia) within a tribal community, desert and semi-desert (Sajlamāsah – Qayrawān), where Islam had already ‘wiped the slate clean’, rendering the society a *tabula rasa* that had adopted Islam as promoted by the ‘*salaf*’ (pious ancestor) conquerors, namely as it was determined inside the original deliberative discourse of the Qur’ān in Mecca and Medina. Thus, it was natural that the Ismā‘īli propagandists would restrict their intellectual and religious activity within Africa and the Maghreb to the ‘manifest’ and that they would focus on the organised political aspect through investing the exasperation of the inhabitants against the rulers and by depending on the tribal alliances. Furthermore, it seems that the basic Shī‘ite concept on which they founded their advocacy is the idea of the ‘Mahdī’ and all the related issues such as orienting the followers to evince great reverence for the progeny of the Prophet. This, in addition to the fact that their area was not under the direct influence of the ‘Abbāsīd authority, since the Aghlabīd dynasty was there, which was a small and weak state. This permits us to realise that the success of the Ismā‘īli propagandists would be a political success in the first instance and that the Ismā‘īli state which would epitomise this success would not be different from other states known in the region in terms of its socio-political and legal status, and consequently that the consideration Ismā‘īli ideology, as the distinct philosophical ideology, would be totally absent. This is what actually occurred,

not just in 'Ifrīqīyā' (Africa), the cradle of the Ismā'īli state ('Ubaydīyah, i.e., Fāṭimid), but it is the same thing that occurred in Egypt, which was the seat of its rule and the centre of its civilisation for over two centuries. It could not transform its political victory into an ideological one, neither in Qayrawān nor in Cairo. This is true for the fact that despite the '*madāris al-da'wah*' (schools of proselytisation) established by 'Ubayd-Allāh al-Mahdī, founder of the state, in his capital of 'Mahdīyah' in Tunisia, which was then moved by his grandson al-Manṣūr to 'Manṣūrīyah' (Tunisia); and despite the '*madāris al-ḥikmah*' (schools of wisdom) established by the Fāṭimid caliphs in Egypt, and particularly in Cairo, the base for their conflicts with the Caliph al-Mu'izz (namely from AH 362) until the collapse of their state at the hands of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayubī (Saladdin) in AH 567 and the return of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate to it – despite all these schools that the state protected and was keen to make centres of intellectual enlightenment and ideological formation, Ismā'īli philosophy in Ifrīqīyā and Egypt could not exceed the circles of senior advocates for whom discussions concerning the creed and doctrines at the philosophical level had been almost entirely confined inside the walls of the 'schools of wisdom' and the *dār al-'ilm* (lit., house of knowledge) specifically constructed for them within the caliphal palace. Thus, the cultural scene in Egypt and the Maghreb remained under implicit or explicit Sunni influence. And, once the Fāṭimid state had collapsed, the Shī'ite tradition was gone from the Egyptian milieu, socially and intellectually. As for the Maghreb, the allegiance shown to the Fāṭimid state, after it collapsed in Egypt in AH 362, was merely a political allegiance, and in most cases it was a nominal one only. It is well known that the Fāṭimid presence in the western Arab world had ended, even in that nominal form, during the first decades of the fifth century AH, that is to say nearly one and a half centuries before the collapse of the Fāṭimid state.³⁰

All this had transpired in Ifrīqīyā and Egypt where the Ismā'īli movement had succeeded in establishing its state but where it had failed to disseminate its philosophy and propagate its ideology. As for the Orient, and in particular in the Iranian provinces, the situation was entirely different. The Ismā'īli movement there had actually failed to acquire political authority, yet, and it had often concluded a truce with the existing authority. However, it succeeded in imposing its presence over the cultural milieu, so it dominated several centres of learning in Rayy, Isfahan and Khurāsān. And as the requirements of maintaining political control in Egypt and Ifrīqīyā drove the Ismā'īli propagandists to focus their activity there in the political field within the boundaries of the 'manifest' which held greater importance

in ensuring the allegiance of the people to the state and not the philosophy. Therefore, the requirements of cultural hegemony and its preservation had led the propagandists in Iran to abandon direct political work for intellectual work and focus thereafter on spreading the philosophy that underpinned their religious and political ideology – the factors that resulted in the foundation of the Hermetic Ḥarrānian philosophical school, particularly in Khurāsān, in order to serve the Ismā‘īli movement in terms of thought, yet, *without* adopting its *political* ideology. And undoubtedly, historical, socio-political and local cultural factors that constituted the determinants of the general status quo in Iran had imposed such an orientation on the Ismā‘īli movement. Consequently, it is important for us here to highlight some of the elements of that status quo.

On the one hand, all of greater Iran had been – before and after Islam – the scene of many philosophical and religious trends, which made political allegiance *conditional*, to a large extent, through the prevalence of an *intellectual* allegiance. And on the other hand, all of the territories of Iran were under the surveillance of the ‘Abbāsīd state which feared any opposition movement that might take root there, and in particular, one of Ismā‘īli stripe. For both reasons, the Ismā‘īli propagandists were obliged to focus on intellectual work instead of taking risks in political organisations which would inevitably be pursued and prosecuted. Thus, they tended peculiarly towards intellectual circles and centres of learning, and were not reluctant in engaging, within the entourage of some local emirs in order to be able to utilise political authority and its men (Sunnis and moderate Shi‘ites), in the dissemination of the philosophy that underpinned their ideology, by which I mean the Hermetic and religious philosophy according to the way in which they presented and employed it. And thus, this was the way in which they promoted broadly the ‘philosophy’ that included syncretic elements of Neo-Pythagoreanism and Neo-Platonism in their Ḥarrānian Oriental strain and Hermetic mystical knowledge in addition to some elements of ancient Zoroastrian Iranian thought which consecrated the illuminationist epistemological order in all of Iran and rendered it the basis of the philosophical culture there, in its various branches.

Therefore, in addition to the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity that constituted the primary philosophical point of reference for the entire Ismā‘īli trend, three great Ismā‘īlī philosophers emerged in Persia (greater Iran) who all lived in one century (at the end of the third century and early fourth century AH), which is the same time period when the school of logic was formed in Baghdad with Mattā and al-Fārābī. Abū ‘Abdullah bin Aḥmad al-Nasfī or al-Nakhshabi al-Bardaghi was the disciple of one

of the prominent early Ismā‘īli propagandists in Khurāsān the emir al-Ḥusayn bin ‘Alī al-Murūrūzī who had great influence in the region, and who attracted many political and scientific figures to Ismā‘īli doctrine, which compelled Naṣr bin Aḥmad, the fourth emir of the Sāmānīd state (who ruled between AH 301 and 331), to put him in prison until the day of his death. After him his disciple led the propaganda effort, al-Nasfī, the philosopher who managed to entice the Sāmānīd emir Naṣr bin Aḥmad himself, who acknowledged in the imamate of the Fāṭimid caliph the Shī‘īte Abū ‘Ubayd-Allāh, and sent him the wergild for the above-mentioned Ḥusayn al-Murūrūzī, due to the pressure of Nasfī who had become ‘the absolute master’ in his state. This was that which angered the emir’s commanders and men of state, so he was forced to cede to his son, Nūḥ bin Naṣr, who gathered the Sunni scholars to try al-Nasfī ‘so they debated, disgraced and exposed him . . . , so al-Nasfī was killed, as well as the commanders of the propaganda movement and figures among those related to Naṣr, those who entered the movement and had torn them apart [Nūḥ bin Naṣr].’³¹ Undoubtedly, ‘what happened to those Ismā‘īlis was considered a terrible plight, to the extent that they called it “the great ordeal”. It is no wonder that such an ordeal influenced the cessation of the dissemination of Ismā‘īli propaganda in the ‘lands lying beyond the River’ at that time [namely from AH 331] until Nāṣir Khusrau settled this inconvenience almost one and a half century later, who was followed by al-Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ (d. AH 518), founder of the Nazārīyah [Ismā‘īliyah] in Khurāsān, Persia and Syria.’³²

If the Ismā‘īli movement actually experienced a setback at the political level, it had been able, on the other hand, to impose its presence on the philosophical level and to ensure the continuity of this presence, and this was through the writings of al-Nasfī and in particular his *al-Maḥṣūl* (*The Harvest*), which was the ‘first book on ideology that had been composed for the purpose of circulation and discussion among the Ismā‘īlis’.³³ And, even if we know nothing of the philosophical views of al-Nasfī except what al-Baghdādī wrote of him, ‘al-Nasfī said in his well-known book *al-Maḥṣūl* that the first creator created the soul, then that the first and the second mastered the world through mastering the seven planets and the four humours’, we are brought directly to the realm of Ḥarrānīan Hermetic philosophy. Thus, the books that were published – the books of his contemporary and disciple the famous Ismā‘īli philosopher Abū Ya‘qūb Ishāq bin Aḥmad al-Sijistānī or al-Sijzī³⁴ who was also killed in Turkistan in AH 331 because of his views – give us a clear picture of the development of this Ismā‘īli movement, in terms of the philosophical foundation

of its ideology, and this development enabled his disciple, the great propagandist Aḥmad Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. AH 411), contemporary to Ibn Sīnā, to transform Ismāʿīli ideology into a systematic philosophical formulation, as explained in Chapter 9.

The third Ismāʿīli philosopher who was a contemporary of al-Nasfī and al-Sijzī he is Abū Ḥātim Aḥmad bin Ḥamdān al-Rāzī (d. AH 322). He had a marked influence in Isfahan and Rayy, where he attracted some senior figures to the Ismāʿīli doctrine, such as al-Mardāwīj the commander, who had led a rebellion and seized Isfahan and Rayy and ‘sent messengers carrying large sums of money to Mahdī in Ifrīqīyā and declared his willingness to enter into his obedience’.³⁵ Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī is considered to be one of the early scholars who theorised for Ismāʿīli ideology, and one of his famous books was *Aḳlām al-Nubūwah* (*The Hallmarks of the Prophecy*) in which he ‘dealt with the theories of the Ismāʿīlis concerning messengers and God almighty, the soul and the *hyle*, time and space’, and he also responded to Abū Bakr bin Zakarīyā al-Rāzī, the famous physician (d. AH 321), on the issue of prophecy. Perhaps this latter’s denial of prophecy is the only issue that used to distinguish him from the aforementioned Ismāʿīli philosophers, given that except for this issue, he propogated in his spiritual philosophy the same Ḥarrānian Hermetic philosophy as they did. We must indicate here debate that broke out between those Ismāʿīli philosophers concerning some doctrinal issues. Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī had written *al-Iṣlāḥ* (*Reform*), in which he rejects some of al-Nasfī’s views included in his book *al-Maḥṣūl*. Subsequently, Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijzī wrote *al-Nuṣrah* (*Support*), where he supports al-Nasfī against Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī. This debate demonstrates that the Ismāʿīli propaganda that used to adopt secrecy and concealment as its *modus operandi* had been transformed – in Iran – into an open philosophical movement, and the impact of this fact must have been reflected in the intellectual life of that region.

Thus, the Iranian provinces had known other intellectual figures who engaged in the same philosophy without being committed politically to the Ismāʿīli movement. Of these figures, we might mention Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, who has been described by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī while speaking of the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity as one of those ‘who had alleged that philosophy directs *al-sharīʿah* [Islamic law], and that the *sharīʿah* is a burden of philosophy, and one of them is like the mother [the philosophy] and the other is the wet nurse’, and, further, that ‘he professed the Zaydī *madhab* and followed the emir of Khurāsān [the aforementioned Naṣr bin Aḥmad] who had written to him in order to disseminate philosophy with the intercession of the *sharīʿah* and to invite people to it with

gentleness, appropriation and desire'.³⁶ Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī describes Abū Zayd al-Balkhī as 'the master of the Orient in the types of wisdom',³⁷ and he exaggerates in his evaluation when he says: 'he had no equal during the early eras, and he assumed that he would have no peer in the coming future'. Al-Balkhī was actually a prominent scientific figure and was called 'the Jāḥiẓ of Khurāsān' because he was a man of literature, theology and philosophy.³⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm describes him, saying that he used to 'travel around countries and roam the earth, and he had a good knowledge of philosophy and ancient sciences', and al-Rāzī, the physician, says that he studied philosophy after him. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī notes also that among those who followed the methodology of al-Balkhī concerning 'the dissemination of philosophy in consistency with the *sharī'ah*' were Abū Tammām al-Naysābūrī and Abū Ḥasan al-ʿAmrī.³⁹

Thus, it seems that while the Peripatetic school of logic was taking shape in Baghdad, with Mattā and al-Fārābī (during the early fourth century AH), an opposing school of philosophy was under formation in Khurāsān and Persia, with Hermetic origins, first led by propagandist philosophers of the Ismāʿīli philosophy, but then ending in the hands of other philosophers who were uncommitted to the Ismāʿīli movement. Just as the leadership of the school of logic in Baghdad had ended up in the hands of the logician Abū Sulaymān, who was a contemporary of Ibn Sīnā, we might also say that the leadership of the competitor school of Khurāsān wound up in the hands of that latter, namely, Ibn Sīnā. The master sheikh does not, in fact, conceal his association with it, as he tells us that his father and brother were among those 'who responded to the propaganda of the Egyptians', namely the Fāṭimids, and that a group of the Ismāʿīli propagandists used to frequently visit the house of his father and that he would listen to their discourse on the 'soul and reason', and that they invited him to embrace their doctrine, although he was not inclined to do so. On the other hand, the master sheikh observes with great pride that he entered the Samānid 'library' at the time of Nūḥ bin Maṣṣūr, and it was a great library respected and referred to by various historians. Ibn Sīnā says: 'I entered a building that consisted of many houses, in every house there were boxes of books piled on top of each other. In one of the houses there were books of poetry and Arabic language, and in another there were books of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and also in every house was a separate science. So I read the index of the books of the earlier scholars and I asked for whatever I needed from them. I saw books that have never been reached any person, books that I had never seen before nor did I ever see later. So I read those books and relished their benefits.'⁴⁰

And if we have focused here on the figures of the Hermetic Ismā‘īli school of philosophy in Khurāsān and Persia, it was not merely for the purpose of identifying those termed by Ibn Sīnā ‘the Orientals’, nor was it only to reflect the cast of the general intellectual atmosphere of philosophy that characterised the thought of Ibn Sīnā and inspired in him his project on the Oriental Philosophy, but also – and this is what interests us – in order to identify the fate of the Ismā‘īli philosophy in its cradle. This was due to the fact that Ibn Sīnā, considered from the perspective of his belonging to the legacy, of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī the heritage of the instauration of the ‘universal reason’ within Arab culture, represents the moment of the eruption of the contradiction of Arab reason with *itself*, as we have indicated in the previous paragraphs. Thus, he – namely Ibn Sīnā himself – is perceived this time from the angle that he installed the ‘Oriental’ school of philosophy of Ismā‘īli origin, which epitomises the moment of the crisis or even the failure of the intellectual movement of the Ismā‘īlis in Khurāsān and Persia. As we have previously indicated, this movement had initially sought intellectual suzerainty, which would subsequently entail political control, but the strategy it was founded upon in disseminating the ‘opposing philosophy’ – the Hermetic philosophy – along with the openness towards Aristotelian rational knowledge such as logic and the natural sciences, which led eventually to the ‘waning’ of the doctrine within the philosophy, and of course, at the expense of politics. The means had become ends, and nothing of the features of Ismā‘īli ideology was left in the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā except for those aspirations towards ‘the spiritual city’ (*al-madīnah al-rūḥānīyah*) considered by the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity to be a symbol of the polis of which they dreamt.⁴¹ With Avicenna, Hermetism triumphed over the Ismā‘īli cultural strategy when it considered its spiritual city as a purpose after being a mere means, thus, the ‘supreme joy’ previously depicted by Ibn Sīnā had become the substitute to armed revolution: the primary and final goal of the Ismā‘īli current. Thus, the Oriental philosophy of Ibn Sīnā had situated this stream, in Persia and Khurāsān, in a certain contradiction with itself, and consequently it too began suffering also from a ‘crisis of fundamentals’.

The Ismā‘īli movement in the Orient suffered from this ‘crisis’, and even more intensely, in the political sphere. The attempts of its propagandists intending to annex the Iranian provinces to the Fāṭimid state through attracting the local emirs had failed. And when the Buyids, moderate Shī‘ites, had reined in the power in Baghdad, their superiors preferred to exercise effective authority on behalf of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph instead of ceding it to the Fāṭimid caliph. And if some Buyid emirs sometimes allowed the Ismā‘īli

propagandists to move openly in Iraq and Persia, the Sunni Ghaznavid Empire and the Great Seljuq Empire, which had been established on the ruins of the Sāmānid state, launched a terrible and massive campaign against the Ismāʿīli propagandists and their followers. They evicted them, murdered them and burned their libraries, and the campaign reached Iraq and Syria after the Seljuqs overran Baghdad in AH 447, and their leader, Turgul Beg, had been granted the title of 'sultan' by the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Qā'im bi-Amr-Allāh (AH 422–467). So it was only normal that the Ismāʿīli movement should reconsider its method of operation in Iraq and Iran. The policy of 'openness' had failed, as had working for intellectual hegemony and the attraction of the local emirs, so they were left only with clandestine work. This was the method to which they had resorted with Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ, the man who had entered initially into the service of the Seljuq sultans, before the minister Niẓām al-Mulk came to doubt him and exiled him. So Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ went to Egypt where he became famous and aroused the suspicion of some Fāṭimid leaders with whom he competed, who therefore strove to imprison him or exile him. Thus, he returned to Persia where he worked to organise an Ismāʿīli movement, a well-structured occult organisation, on the basis of personal allegiance. He was able to seize many fortifications, and at the forefront of these was the heavily fortified Qalʿat al-Mawt (lit., Citadel of Death), which he considered his base from the beginning of the year AH 483. When the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mustaʿlī bi-Allāh (AH 487–495) was enthroned after his father's death, the caliph al-Mustanṣir, instead of his brother Abū Maṣṣūr Nizār who was the crown prince, Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ joined the opponents of Mustaʿlī and the supporters of Nizār. And when this latter died in Cairo in AH 488, he became the leader of the new Ismāʿīli movement, followers of Nizār, in Iraq and Persia, and he began agitating for the 'hidden Imam', while the propaganda before had been for the *manifest* Fāṭimid caliph. Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ instated himself as the surrogate of the Imam and drew upon the principle of *al-taʿlīm* (lit., learning, or the necessity to derive knowledge from the teacher, *al-muʿallim* or the infallible Imam). Therefore, he set aside advocacy of theory and thought, and adopted the principle of 'learning' as a means to associate followers with his movement, depending on psychological control and strict organisation. He achieved in this way a fabulous success, which enabled him to establish strictly disciplined occult orders that spread fear and terror (through the acts of their '*fidāʿiyyin*' [shock troops] and through the success of their propaganda of being associated with the 'Teacher', namely the hidden Imam in occultation) both in and around the Seljuq state and the curia of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate. And just as this latter had recruited its army to fight

the armed ‘gangs’ – the followers of Ṣabbāḥ – it also recruited scholars and theologians to invalidate the theory of the ‘Teacher’ and ‘learning’, the fundamental principles of his propaganda; and the first to be enlisted for this task was Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī.

Sufism and Reconciling ‘*Irfān* and *Bayān*’

The discussion in the foregoing paragraphs focused on the evolution of the relations between *al-burbhān* (demonstration by inferential evidence) and *al-bayān* (explication/indication) on the one hand, and between *al-burbhān* (evidentiary proof/demonstration) and *al-‘irfān* (gnostic illumination) on the other. Now we must say a word about the evolution of the relation between the *‘irfān* and *bayān* so that the most important manifestations of the ‘crisis of fundamentals’, within the Arab culture will be complete. And we must note, first and foremost, that when we were discussing *‘irfān* in the previous paragraphs we meant Shī‘ite illuminationism, and in particular the Ismā‘īli; as for Sufi gnosis, we have remained completely silent about it, and this was not due to a mere ‘defect’ of language such as we have explained earlier, but also because of the difference of the roles of each of them within Arab life: Shī‘ite illuminationism used to employ Hermetism against the ‘Abbāsīd state and its Sunni *bayānī* (explicatory) ideology. As for Sufi gnosis, it had a different status, the contours of which we shall now trace.

There is no doubt that the Shī‘ite illuminationism and Sufi gnosis come from a common origin: Hermetism. Therefore, the distinction between them in terms of epistemology is meaningless, however, the distinction between them becomes a necessity if perceived from the standpoint of the *political* and ideological task that each had within Arab life. As we have previously indicated, the struggle between the Shī‘ites and Sunnis was a political one and consequently the relation between the *bayān* and Shī‘ite *‘irfān* was governed by politics. As for the conflict between the Sunnis and Sufis, it was purely a conflict of epistemology. And if sometimes some political manifestations had emerged on the surface, they had always fallen within the general ideological locus of the Sunni state, neither outside it nor in opposition. On the other hand, the Sufis continued to harrass the Shī‘ites and compete with them over Hermetism, and to adopt the general structure of their ‘spiritual city’, devoid of the political role accorded to it by the Ismā‘īlis; and moreover, they competed with them over their early Imams, even if strictly in the religious scope.

Indeed, Shīʿism was the ‘first to be Hermetised in Islam’, but the interference between the Shīʿite *ghulāt* and their Imams up until Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq on the one hand, and between Sufism on the other hand, is doubtless a historical fact; and the separation between them did not occur until the final schism between the ʿAbbāsīd state and the Shīʿite opposition with the emergence of the esoteric Ismāʿīli movement. Only then did the Sufis find themselves facing one of two alternatives: either ‘disobedience’ to the state, or coping with it or at least not objecting to its policy. Therefore, a movement began to take form that would be later known as ‘Sunni Sufism’, namely, the Sufism which moves within Sunni ideology, and particularly outside the current of other esoteric movements.

We should also remember here that the time when esoteric currents had emerged and the concomitant estrangement between Shīʿites and Sufis occurred was the time of the rule of al-Maʾmūn, the period of the dominance of the Muʿtazilah and the plight of the ‘Sunnis’, especially the Ḥanbalis, was due to the issue of ‘the createdness of the Qurʾān’. Furthermore, this time was also the period of ‘the codification of opinion’ and ‘legitimation of the legitimator’ with al-Shāfiʿī. In addition to this, it was the era of the advent of political ‘seditions’, of which the civil war that took place between al-Maʾmūn and his brother al-Amīn was only one. Undoubtedly, these contradictions and conflicts were the cause of confusion and doubt, or rather the cause of intellectual ‘crises’.

Al-Ḥārith bin Asad al-Muḥāsibī (AH 165–243) was a theologian, scholar and jurist, and one of those morally affected by the crisis of the era, among those who suffered from it in their spiritual lives, and perhaps their physical ones as well. However, al-Muḥāsibī was the only one – so far as we know – who was *aware* of this crisis and who attempted to overcome it, that is, to consciously *escape* from it, just as al-Ghazālī would do three centuries later. And al-Muḥāsibī had left, just as al-Ghazālī, the analysis of that spiritual crisis of his, intending with this analysis, as well as that of al-Ghazālī, to justify his transition from the indication of ‘*bayān*’ – as practised and codified by scholars and theologians – to the illumination of ‘*ʿirfān*’ as practised by Sufis, without concealing his eagerness to adhere to the Arab ‘religious rational’ as determined by the Qurʾānic text and the *sunnah*, which implies – at the epistemological level which we are discussing – achieving some kind of reconciliation between *bayān* and ‘*ʿirfān*’. Al-Muḥāsibī says in the context of his presentation of his intellectual crisis:

I still see for a while the differences of the *ummah* and I seek the clear method . . . and I heeded their doctrines and their utterances so I commented as much

as I could, and I saw their differences like a deep ocean where many people have drowned and few have escaped . . . I considered our states in our time . . . thus, I have seen a difficult time, where the doctrines of faith have changed and the bonds of Islam have been rent asunder . . . thus, the consciences and the circumstances in our time are different from the ones of our predecessors.

Then he adds:

nevertheless, God made this world contain strangers to their times, belonging to the spared faction of the Messenger . . . – and The Merciful God guided me toward one of His people where I found signs of righteousness, piety and devoutness, and the preference of the afterlife over [this] life . . . and they are the Imams of the true religion . . . scholars of the religion of God . . . abandoning profundity and extremism . . . enraged by debate and hypocrisy . . . so I became eager for their doctrine drawing from their benefits . . . so God opened a knowledge for me which clarified for me its *proofs* . . .; therefore I believed in it deeply and I embraced it in the innermost depths of my consciousness and considered it the basis of my religion . . .⁴²

Thus, al-Muḥāsibī transitioned from *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and the *kalām* (theology) to Sufism and *ʿirfān*, but without leaving the circle of *bayān*: he intended to derive from Hermeticism mode and method and leave content and substance behind, but was his endeavour ‘sound’?

Al-Muḥāsibī had focused on what al-Ghazālī called *ʿilm al-muʿāmalah* (lit., the knowledge of conduct), so he aimed to write about asceticism, reverence, repentance and the state of the spirit, and he reached the ‘apex’ in this field with his book *al-Riʿāyah li-Ḥuqūq Allāh* (*Preservation of the Rights of God*),⁴³ which is regarded by critics, in ancient and contemporary times, as one of the books on which al-Ghazālī based his book *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (*The Revival of the Disciplines of Religion*). As for *ʿilm al-mukāshafah* (lit., knowledge of disclosure/revelation) – which corresponded to the terms employed by al-Ghazālī when he wrote *Māhīyat al-ʿAql wa Maʿnāhu wa Ikbtilāf al-Nās fīhi* (*The Essence of Reason, its Significance and Differences among People*) and another called *Fahm al-Qurʾān* (*Comprehending the Qurʾān*),⁴⁴ where al-Muḥāsibī attempts to accord a gnostic significance to ‘reason’ for relying on the text [of the Qurʾān] and the *sunnaḥ*. Thus, reason as it is said by ‘some of the theologians: is not the finest part of the soul’, not ‘a knowledge bestowed by God and subject to expansion through acquired knowledge’,⁴⁵ nor is it means for proving the unseen (*in absentia*) through the witnessed (*in praesentia*), but it is an ‘instinct’ (*gharīzah*) realised by the subject in his innermost with reason derived from God, namely by comprehending the discourse of God to people, whether this discourse is in the form

of a 'seen manifest' such as the apparent form of thing (which is referred to by al-Jāhīz as *al-naṣbah* as 'things exist *per se* to the scrutinizing observer and the distinguishing [possessor of] reason (*al-ʿāqil al-mutabayyin*) so that they ponder how God created them, and how His creation is manifested in them'⁴⁶, or whether in the form of a 'decisive report' from the text [of the Qurʾān] or the *sumnah*. In addition to this reason (*al-ʿāqil*), which is the 'comprehension of the *bayān* [indication]' and where 'those with right guidance and the sinners' are equal, there is a distinction between those with right guidance such as perspicacity and cognisance with which they comprehend the 'truths of the significations of the *bayān*', and they reason 'the greatness of the omnipotence of God . . . His punishment and His reward' so they revere Him and long for Him, and are able to attain to the observation Him just as the eye can observe things it sees. And it is clear that al-Muḥāsibī intends – with this 'illuminationist' connotation he imparts to reason – to establish reason and reasonableness on the basis of God, and not *vice versa*, whereas theologians founded divinity and the conception of God on reason. In other words, al-Muḥāsibī intends to found *bayān* on the basis of *ʿirfān*, so what was the response of the partisans of these two orientations?

Al-Muḥāsibī incurred the wrath of all parties concerned: the Muʿtazilah criticised him because he attacked them and described them as 'innovators' (*ahl al-bidaʿ*); the Shīʿites opposed him because he was against them politically and in terms of creed and he accused a group among them of being infidels (*kufār*); and the *fuqahāʾ* condemned him because he criticised them for their rejection of the *ʿulūm al-qalb* (the knowledges of the heart) and focused on debate, issuing *fatwas* and judgments. As for Sufis, despite his preference for them and the fact that he was affiliated to them, they showed a reservation in regard to him because he did not 'break' from dialectical theology, and continued to 'profane himself' with it. Nevertheless, the most cruelty towards him came from the Ḥanbalis: thus, despite the fact that Imam Aḥmad Bin Ḥanbal sympathised with al-Muḥāsibī's asceticism and piety, he did not hide his irritation but rather made war on al-Muḥāsibī's methodology, namely on his mode of comprehending the system of *bayān*. Ibn Ḥanbal forsook him, and repulsed people from him. And when this latter died, the harassment al-Muḥāsibī experienced during the era of the Muʿtazilite suzerainty – who only managed to ignore him – was nothing in comparison with what he experienced from the Ḥanbalis, after the 'Sunni coup' during the rule of Mutawakkil. The harassment of the Ḥanbalis intensified, until he had to disappear within the confines of his house and 'he died there where only four individuals could reach him'.⁴⁷

The attempt of al-Muḥāsibī failed, not just because the Ḥanbalis waged war on him, but also because the general trend of Arab thought in his time was inclined towards the alliance of the indication of *bayān* with the inferential evidence of *burbān* against the illumination of *ʿirfān* – the strategy of al-Maʾmūn – as we have previously mentioned. As for Sufism, it tended to root deeper into Hermetism: and so the great Sufis emerged, such as al-Baṣṭāmī (d. AH 261) and the proponents of ‘the oneness of the witnessed’ (*aṣḥāb waḥdat al-shuhūd*) such as al-Junayd (d. AH 297), as well as some of those who disparaged the religious obligations and rituals arguing that they were occupied with the contemplation of God spiritually. As a result, the hostility between the Sufis and *fuqahāʾ* took root, which was the reason for a series of persecutions and misfortunes suffered by the Sufis at the hands of the *fuqahāʾ*. This reached its climax during the inquisition known as the inquisition of Ghulām al-Khalīl ‘which is the inquisition where almost seventy Sufis were accused, including Junayd, the sheikh of the sect in Baghdad, were all tried and sentenced to death, but were then released’.⁴⁸

Perhaps the campaign that was launched by the *fuqahāʾ* against the Sufis was what drove them to organise into groups and ‘*ṭuruq*’ (orders lodges), each having its own sheikh so that Sufism became transformed from an inner experience lived by the individual into a ‘realm of spirituality’, to a hierarchically structured entity, reproducing in its general structure the Shīʿite organisations ‘until we see Sufism a century later totally characterised by the Ismāʿīli system of orders graduated in accordance with the level of cognisance and ethics’⁴⁹. Thus, the Sufis came to compete with the Shīʿites in many of their basic principles, so they agitated for allegiance instead of the Imamate, and they attributed some kind of infallibility to their holy men and considered such a one to be the ‘*quṭb*’ (magnate) – or the ‘*al-ghawth*’ (succourer) – the great master, and further they asserted the ‘Muḥammadan truth’, upon which they established an order of existence similar to the prophetic septennial ‘ontology’ of Ismāʿīlism. Moreover, the Sufis competed with and harrassed the Shīʿites even in the area of the affiliation to ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, where they accorded the concept of ‘*ahl al-bayt*’ (family members of the Prophet) a broader meaning and considered such to be inclusive of all Muslims.⁵⁰ Thus, the Sufis manoeuvred within the sanctum sanctorum of the Shīʿah and challenged them with their own weapons and lifted the political character from the struggle, reflecting onto it a purely religious one; and besides this, they concluded a truce with the state, or rather *served* it as they did not ‘intend to oppose its governors by the sword even if they were wrongdoers’.⁵¹

Perhaps this conflicting schismatic position adopted by the Sufis – challenging the Shī‘ites with their own weapons and divesting Sufism of its political character on the one hand while making peace with the state or even serving it on the other hand – was responsible for leading matters towards a new incarnation of Sufism at the hand of Ash‘arite Sunnis and consequently to the rewriting of history in a manner that would impart a ‘Sunni’ legitimacy to Sufism. Thus, several urgent attempts to reconcile between *bayān* and Sufi *‘irfān* emerged. And perhaps the oldest and most important of these was that made by Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī, (d. AH 380) in his famous book *al-Ta‘arruf li-Madhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf* (*Introduction to the Madhab of Sufism*).

The Ḥanafī ‘Sufi’ jurist al-Kalābādhī says that God had created in the nation of Muḥammad ‘an elite and chosen people . . . their efforts were true so they acquired the knowledges of study and their refined works were completed and they were granted the knowledges of the inherited . . . they comprehended [things about] Allāh and proceeded towards Allāh and turned away from anything other than Allāh . . . they are of the entrusted of Allāh among His creatures, His elite (*ṣafwatahu*) among mankind, His designated deputies for the Prophet, and his hidden boon friends [*ṣafīyih*]’ then, subsequent to these ‘pious ancestors’ (*al-salaf*), there occurred negligence and deviation so that ‘what is extrinsic to Sufism and what is not attributed to it’ was introduced into it . . . so the hearts were repulsed by it and the soul rejected and left it’. Then he adds: ‘so this obliged me to trace in this book of mine the description of their order [*ṭarīqah*] and to elucidate their false attributions and their course from the assertion of *al-tawḥīd* and the [divine] attributes and other related things that have been subject to doubt by those who had not known their *madhab* . . . and I disclosed the tongue (*lisān*) of knowledge through what was possible to disclose (*mā amkana kashfahu*), and I described using what is apparent and manifest of demonstration by the *bayān* [*bi-ṣāḥir al-bayān*] what is correctly depicted so that it could be comprehended by those who could not comprehend their signs and realised by those who could not realise their idioms, and the faulty interpretation of the ignorant would fall.⁵² After this introduction, which presents the purposes of the book, the process of according ‘Sunni’ legitimacy to Sufism by reverting the meaning of the word ‘Sufism’ to ‘the qualities of those called the ‘elites’ during the time of the Messenger of Allāh’ or to wool (*ṣūf*), ‘the garment of the prophets and the cloth of holy men’⁵³ on the one hand, and by attributing their spiritual lineage to Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib on the other. Then

comes the interpretation of their beliefs in *al-tawḥīd* and the divine attributes, and here al-Kalābādhī dresses Sufis in Ash‘arite guise when he describes them as having ‘reached consensus’ that the Qur’ān is not created; and that Allāh will be seen by the naked eye in the afterlife; and that He creates the acts of the slaves (i.e., human actions); and that He created potentials in them and due to this potential they can act and acquire (the recompense of their deeds – al-Ash‘arī’s doctrine of *al-kasb*); and that He can do whatever he pleases with the slaves ‘whether better for them or not’ along with all other Ash‘arite beliefs with which al-Kalābādhī considers the Sufis to be in ‘unanimous agreement’.⁵⁴ In addition, he depicts them as asserting that they ‘consider the safest and the most assured in what *fuqahā’* have disagreed upon, and they are with the consensus [*ijmā’*] of the two parties as much as they can be, and they consider differences among *fuqahā’* to be a correct thing, and neither of them is in contradiction with the other, and that every *mujtahid* is right according to them’.⁵⁵ Thereafter only, the discussion turns to the discourse on Sufi knowledge which begins with *tashīḥ al-a‘māl* (the rectification of actions) by learning the ordinances of the Islamic *sharī‘ah* such as the fundamentals of *fiqh* and its branches before plunging into ‘the knowledge of notions and witnessed observed things (*mushāhadāt*) and disclosed things (*mukāshafāt*)’ presented by al-Kalābādhī with great concentration and deliberation and in a manner that prevents a clash in terms of suppositions and concepts, with the Ash‘arite Sunni religious creed. Al-Kalābādhī’s book *al-Ta‘arruf* is a clever *fatwā* of *fiqh* purposing to introduce Sufism into the locus of the ‘lawful’ (*ḥalāl*) or even the circle of ‘recommended’ (*muṣtaḥab*) from the viewpoint of strict hard-line Sunnis.

We should note here the book *al-Lama‘ (Refulgence)* by Abu Naṣr al-Sirāj al-Ṭūsī (d. AH 378), who was a contemporary of al-Kalābādhī and strove, as he did, to seek ‘Sunni’ legitimacy for Sufism through associating all its issues with the Qur’ān and the *sunnah* and through basing Sufi assertions on *āyāt* (Qur’ānic verses) and prophetic traditions and reports of the Companions of the Prophet. Moreover, his book is considered one of the most important and oldest references in the history of Islamic Sufism. As for Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. AH 386) who lived during the same period, and who tended, in his famous book *Qūt al-Qulūb (Nurture of the Hearts)*, in *‘ilm al-mu‘āmalah* (the knowledge of conduct) towards Sufi conduct, so it was an extension of the book *al-Ri‘āyah li-Ḥuqūq Allāh* by al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī. And as we have previously mentioned, the work of al-Ghazālī in *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* is almost restricted to transferring the substance of these two books, reorganising them and reclassifying them, and so, Ibn

Taymīyah said ‘that the book of *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* by al-Ghazālī could be summarised by the book of *al-Ri‘āyah li-Ḥuqūq Allāh* by al-Muḥāsibī and *Qūt al-Qulūb* by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’, whereas Abū ‘Ubayd al-Raḥmān al-Salmī (d. AH 412), author of *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīyah* (*The Biographical Dictionary of the Sufis*) and *Tārīkh Ahl al-Ṣaffah* (*The History of the Elite*) and others, was the master of a large number of the men of the Sufis of the fifth century AH. One of his most prominent disciples was Abū Sa‘īd bin Abī al-Khayr (AH 357–440), the famous Persian Sufi, who had acquired at his hand ‘the first shred’,⁵⁶ and Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (AH 376–465) who had composed in AH 437 his famous letter known by his name in which he had ‘officially sanctioned’ the attempt of al-Kalābādihī and al-Sirāj whereby the ‘Sunni’ legitimisation of Sufi gnosis became a closed case, the factor that allowed al-Ghazālī, just after him, to plunge further, not only in the ‘knowledge of conduct’ as he did in *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, but also in *‘ilm al-mukāshafah* (the knowledge of disclosure) to which he devoted several books that fall under the category of what he called ‘the otherwise doubtful’ as we will see in the next section.

We cannot conclude this paragraph and move on to al-Ghazālī without noting the development of Sufism at the socio-political level. Sufism had transformed into a religious socio-political institution in Khurāsān, Persia and Iraq during the two Sunni empires, the Ghaznavid Empire and the Great Seljuq Empire. In those institutions members were organised into *khanqahat* (*takāyā*, *rabṭ* or fraternal orders) administered by sheikhs and protected by the government, and seeking popular support from and through it. The aforementioned Abū Sa‘īd bin Abī al-Khayr was at the head of the sheikhs of the *khanqahat* during the first half of the fifth century AH, and he is considered the first to have legislated for the mode of life in them, and he administered some of them and held assemblies to debate the scholars of the ‘manifest’ and the imams of the *madhāhib*. In brief terms, Abū Sa‘īd led a large-scale Sufi movement in the provinces of Khurāsān, in particular during the period of the Seljuqs who permitted Sufism so that Sufis might act as an organised party with the mission of ‘purifying the public’ spiritually and, consequently, *politically*. The famous Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk remained in his post for thirty years and had control of all matters ‘where no duties were left for the Seljuq Sultan except for the bedstead and hunting’. He said to his sultan, who chastised him for spending generously on the Sufis: ‘I have established an army for you called the army of the night, if your army sleeps during the night, the army of the night will stand in rows at the hands of their Lord, so their tears shall come in streams and their tongues shall speak and their palms

shall be extended for Allāh in supplication for you and your army . . . so you and your army live under their watch, and with their supplication you live and with their blessings you are granted good fortune’, and the story goes: ‘so the king kept silent’.⁵⁷

Do we need to say that the purpose of all this was: to resist Fāṭimid propaganda and in particular the esoteric movement of Ta‘līmīyah led by Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ? It is sufficient to indicate that the minister Niẓām al-Mulk, who recruited and employed ‘*ulamā*’ and *fuqahā*’ – and at the head of them was al-Ghazālī – in order to respond to the Ta‘līmīyah did not die a natural death. He was assassinated by one of the ‘paramilitaries’ of Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ. So we can conclude by saying: it was the danger represented by the Shī‘ite *‘irfān*, during the expansion of Fāṭimid rule, between the fourth and fifth centuries, a danger for the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate and its Sunni client states, which imposed this reconciliation or even the *alliance* between Sufi gnosis and Arab *bayān*, and the beginning of the ‘crisis of fundamentals’ within Arab culture, or even the formal inception of the crisis of Arab reason.

Walking Out of Baghdād: al-Ghazālī’s Crisis

In the preceding paragraphs, we have presented the manifestations of the ‘crisis of fundamentals’ within Arab reason, the crisis due to the collision and interference of intrinsically competing epistemological systems, *bayān* with *burhān* in one regard, and *burhān* with *‘irfān* in another, and then *bayān* with *‘irfān* in a third. It was normal, especially given that the issue here concerns the clash of ideological structures and not a conflict of opponents, it was normal that the clash and the interference would develop between those structures from a bilateral conflict (between two systems at a time) into a general conflict involving all these systems. And this is what actually transpired. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (AH 450–505) had diagnosed in his spiritual experience and intellectual production this conflict and the interference of these systems.

In his analysis of the intellectual experience and his spiritual crisis, Abū Ḥāmid says: ‘The difference of conduct in religions and sects, and then the difference between the imams of *madhāhib* [doctrinal schools], noting the multitude of sects and the variation of orders, is a deep ocean where many have drowned and very few have been saved, and every sect claims to be among those who were saved.’ Then he adds: ‘And, since I was in the heyday of youth and in my prime age, from the time of my adolescence

before reaching the age of twenty up until now – and I am almost fifty – I plunged into the abyss of that deep ocean . . . I have never left a proponent of esoteric doctrine [*bāṭinīyan*] unless I have become fully acquainted with the source of his esotericism, nor left I a proponent of what is manifest [*ẓāhirīyan*] unless I came to know how he acquired his doctrine of what is manifest, nor a philosopher until I attained to the perception of the essence of his philosophy, nor a theologian until I strove to seek the purposes behind his *kalām* and debates, nor a Sufi until I cared to find the secret of his Sufism, nor a worshipper until I inquired into the results of his worship, nor a heretic who denied the attributes of God until I pursued him to realise the reason for his heretical denial of the attributes.’ The issue is then a general presentation in declarations and treatises of various intellectual streams and doctrines known by Arab thought in his time. And as al-Ghazālī says, he had made this presentation for ‘the types of seekers’, namely the searchers for the truth, after he became free from the ‘affiliation with tradition’ and had broken with ‘the inherited ideologies’, for the purpose of seeking ‘the knowledge of facts’, namely ‘the knowledge of *positivism* . . . in which . . . nothing is undoubted and it is not apt to being wrong or deluded’.⁵⁸

We will set aside the views of al-Ghazālī concerning the method he utilised to achieve this ‘knowledge of facts’ and the mode he followed to ‘overcome’ this spiritual crisis of his, as the author of *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (*Salvation from Misguidance*) cites all that after having overcome this ‘crisis’, namely after he had opted for Sufi gnosis, where consequently citing the ‘facts’ of this crisis would subsequently be governed by this choice. In other words, al-Ghazālī here restructures his experience from the benefit of hindsight and from an *a posteriori* point of departure and not by retrieving it as it actually was. So, we will set aside the actual discourse of *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* and will move to what interests us more, which is the way al-Ghazālī attempted to orchestrate the relation between *bayān* and *burhān* and *ʿirfān*, relying on the objective factors ruling him, to this or that degree, in what he had achieved such as responses and choices.

We would like to note that al-Ghazālī was born in the city of Ghazālāh, near the city of Ṭūs in Khurāsān, and he lived, studied and grew up during the period of ‘the Ashʿarite coup’ over the Muʿtazilah, a *coup d’état* that was coincident with Niẓām al-Mulk’s seizure of ministerial control in the Seljuq Empire as a successor of Abū Naṣr Maṣṣūr bin Muḥammad al-Kandarī who was a Ḥanafī Muʿtazilite. The Ashʿarites had encountered, during the period of al-Kandarī, an inquisition, ‘the evils of which reached the farthest horizons of Khurāsān, Syria, Hijaz and Iraq’, they were

persecuted and banned from preaching, teaching and declamation in mosques, and their leaders were subject to arrest and exile.⁵⁹ At the head of these was Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī who was obliged to emigrate from Nisapūr to Mecca and Medina (and therefore was called ‘the Imam of the two mosques’). This ordeal lasted for more than ten years, and only ended with the killing of the vizier al-Kandarī in AH 456 and Niẓām al-Mulk’s taking over his place in the ministry. Niẓām al-Mulk supported the Shāfiʿīs and the Ashʿarites against the Ḥanafis and the Muʿtazilah who had conducted the aforementioned campaign. Only then did Ashʿarite leaders go back to Nisapūr and at their forefront was the ‘imam of the two mosques’ al-Juwaynī who began teaching in the school founded by Niẓām al-Mulk there – the Niẓāmīyah – for the purpose of promoting Shāfiʿī doctrine in *fiqh* and Ashʿarite doctrine in terms of creed and defending both of them. Al-Ghazālī went to Nisapūr in AH 470 to study under al-Juwaynī, and he remained there for eight years, studying and participating in debates, and working in assisting in lessons. When his teacher died in AH 478, he joined the staff of the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk and was present among the corps of scientists and scholars who surrounded the latter. Al-Ghazālī took part in their debates and discussions, and he demonstrated his preeminence so Niẓām al-Mulk appointed him as a rector in his Niẓāmīyah school in Baghdad in AH 484. If we associate all this with what we have emphasised in the previous paragraph, including the encouragement of Niẓām al-Mulk of Sufism and Sufis, we realise that the position of al-Ghazālī concerning ‘the types of seekers’ such as those affiliated to theology, esotericism, philosophy and Sufism would be influenced and governed by the *ideology of the state* where it (i.e., his position) was formed in its schools. Al-Ghazālī worked in its palace and took over teaching on its behalf in the most prominent institutes, informed by the ideology predicated upon combining Shāfiʿī *fiqh*, Ashʿarite creed and Sufism.

Moreover, the position of al-Ghazālī concerning ‘the types of seekers’ would be dictated by the state when the Caliph al-Mustaẓhirī asked him to compose a response to the esotericism of the Bāṭinīyah, namely the ‘Taʿlīmīyah’ Ismāʿīli stream led by Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ, which we have previously indicated. Al-Ghazālī himself said that ‘the holy and noble commands of al-Mustaẓhirī’ had compelled him to ‘compose a book on the rebuttal of esotericism’ (*al-Radd ʿalā al-Bāṭinīyah*).⁶⁰ And if we add that this response to esotericism, namely to Ismāʿīli philosophy, required not only the examination of this philosophy, but also a return to ‘philosophy’ in general, namely to respond to philosophers also, in view of the formative connection between Ismāʿīli philosophy and ‘Greek’ philosophy as determined by Ibn Sīnā. Further, if we keep in mind, on the other hand, that the

'method of the ancient scholars' in terms of theology had met with catastrophe after al-Bāqillānī as we indicated in Chapter Six, paragraph 5 and that al-Juwaynī, the teacher of al-Ghazālī, launched the work according to the 'method of the later scholars' that had left inferring the unseen (*in absentia*) through the manifest (*in praesentia*), and adopted, instead, Aristotelian syllogism, we will realise how compelling was al-Ghazālī's need for logic, and Aristotelian syllogism in particular: he would be in need of it in order to advocate the Ash'arite religious creed against the Mu'tazilah who remained adhering to their preferred methodology, inferring the unseen through the manifest, and he would be in need for it even more to respond to the 'Ta'limīyah' who invalidated 'opinion' (*ra'y*) and 'analogy/syllogism' (*qiyās*) and called for the necessity of taking knowledge from 'the teacher', and finally he would be in need for it to demonstrate 'the incoherence of philosophers'.

The urgent need for logic would drive al-Ghazālī to consider it separate and distinct from philosophy and, also, as a mere 'instrument not related in anything with religion, whether in denial or vindication; but it is a perception of the matters of inference and syllogism' and that it is 'of the same genre mentioned by theologians and those who followed evidence-based knowledge' and, consequently, logic is no different from that except 'in terminology and expressions, and in increasing the exclusion of definitions and ramifications'.⁶¹ And more, in his attempt to 'normalise' logic within Sunni thought, al-Ghazālī went as far as saying that it is the 'correct criterion' exhibited by the Qur'ān itself whereby it expressed the Islamic creed and responded to the disputant unbelievers, and that the forms of the Aristotelian syllogism are the same as the 'Qur'ānic criteria of measure' (*mawāzīn*).⁶² Al-Ghazālī affirms in most of his books that 'logic' is only Greek in *name*; as for its *content*, it consists of some rules of thought common to all human beings; and it is utilised to measure what is correct or corrupt in discourse, accordingly, it is 'the measurement of perception' and 'the criterion' of science and 'the correct measure' and 'the faculties of reasons', so it is necessary for 'all theoretical knowledge whether rational or jurisprudential'. It is necessary in theology 'to repel delusions and heterodox streams and to eliminate all sceptical ideas . . . and to protect the religious creed of the masses from the perturbations of heretics', and Al-Ghazālī adds: 'It is of the same kind of what we have identified in the incoherence of philosophers and we noted in the response to esotericism in the book so-called *al-Mustaẓhirī* and in the book *Ḥujjat al-Ḥaqq wa Qawāṣim al-Bātinīyah* (*The Authoritative Argument of the Truth and the Annihilation of Esotericism*) and in the book *Mufaṣṣil al-Khilāf fī Umūr al-Dīn* (*The Decisive Criterion in the Dispute over Fundamentals of*

Religion). Thus, the need for logic was dictated in the first place by the need to respond to philosophy and esotericism. So, logic was necessary in this arena because it was ‘an instrument employed in ways of reasoning, or even argumentation by true evidence’ and al-Ghazālī adds: ‘we have written in this concern the books *Mihāk al-Nazar* (*Touchstone of Reasoning*) and *Mi‘yār al-‘Ilm* (*The Criterion of Knowledge*) which will be readily understood by *fuqahā*’ (jurisits) and *mutukallimūn* (theologians) whereas it will not be possible to prose any contention or rebuttal for any who is unaware of these two’.⁶³ And logic is also necessary for *fiqh* because ‘discernment/speculation [on the basis of evidence] – *al-naẓa* – in matters of *fiqh* is not in contradiction with *al-naẓar* in matters of reason’ except in the attendant premises; as for the methods of classifying perception and its conditions and testing it are all one.⁶⁴ Hence, for the person who does not heed logic ‘his knowledge is not trustworthy in any case’.⁶⁵ Indeed, the analogy (*qiyās*) of jurisprudence, and analogising the *far‘* or the branch on the basis of the *aṣl* or the root origin or source principle, is sufficient to use legal evidences of the *sharī‘ah*, ‘the text [of the Qur’ān], the *sunnah* and the consensus’ and deducing the judgements from them, because what is incumbent in jurisprudence is the preponderance of supposition (*al-ẓann*) and not complete certainty.⁶⁶ However, the scholar is in need for logic, not only for the correct practice of *qiyās* in *fiqh* correctly, but also in order to be able to debate with other scholars and triumph over them – in particular the adherents of the Ḥanafī *madhab*. Yet, al-Ghazālī was Shāfi‘ī and the state under the authority of which he lived was also Shāfi‘ī, and the great ‘inquisition’ to which the Ash‘arites had been subjected at the hands of the Mu‘tazilah and the Ḥanafīs had occurred in recent history.

Obviously, then, what al-Ghazālī desired by logic was ‘debate’ (*al-jadal*) and not ‘demonstration by inferential evidence’ (*al-burhān*). Thus, he intended to employ it in defending Ash‘arite doctrine in theology and the Shāfi‘ī *madhab* in *fiqh* and to respond to other doctrines. This is reflected clearly in his book on logic where we find him touching upon the premises of syllogism: *al-ḥissīyāt* (sensory [physical]), *al-tajribīyāt* (experimental), *al-mutawātīrāt* (widely transmitted) and cases resulting of previous analogies,⁶⁷ and in general *al-mashhūrāt* (‘famous cases’). Therefore, the certainty intended from logic by al-Ghazālī is not the certainty of evidence in the Aristotelian sense of the word, which does strictly depend on ‘initial true and necessary premises’ as we have seen with al-Fārābī. Al-Ghazālī, however, seeks ‘the certainty of syllogism analogy’ (*yaqīn al-qiyās*), namely, the proper inductive reasoning only. In other words, logic for al-Ghazālī is ‘debate’ according to the terminology of Aristotle, namely ‘inductive reasoning positively or

negatively in one same issue, avoiding falling into contradiction, and defending the positive or negative result'.⁶⁸ This is precisely what interested al-Ghazālī in logic, and thus, he did not tend towards the production of knowledge but to defend one kind of given of it and to destroy the other.

This is what al-Ghazālī asserts in his book *The Incoherence of Philosophers* when he says: 'My entering into objections to them does not come from a position of one seeking to deny, and not as an assured claimant so that I invalidate what they think is definite, through different necessitations. Thus, sometimes I oblige them Mu'tazilite doctrine, and other times Karāmite doctrine, and sometimes Wāqifite doctrine, as I do not defend a specific doctrine, but I consider them all one, as perhaps other sects have contradicted us in some details, and those people are interfering with the fundamental sources of religion, so we ought to confront them as when tribulations occur, grudges fade.'⁶⁹

But why is this 'confrontation' with philosophers necessary? And what are the 'tribulations' that drove him to that? And has he engaged 'all groups' against them?

If we go back to the book *The Incoherence of Philosophers*, we find al-Ghazālī debating Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī and attacking them on issues in which they contradict the Ash'arite view. And if he obliges them a few times to concede Mu'tazilite doctrine, he maintains complete silence upon Shī'ite doctrine in both of its two major divisions, Twelver (*Ithnā'ashariyah*) and Ismā'īli. Although they contradict the philosophers, at least on some basic issues such as the eternity of the world, the silence of al-Ghazālī on Shī'ites and his refrain from 'engaging' philosophers against them can be only explained by one thing, which is that he used to consider them as equivalent to philosophers, namely that they were *opponents*. Therefore, the question is: was not the book of *The Incoherence of Philosophers* written for the purpose of exposing 'the outrages of the Bāṭiniyah'?

This question is fully justified, especially when we discuss the 'tribulations' that drove al-Ghazālī to respond to philosophers. In fact, if we go back to the time when al-Ghazālī lived, we would find that the philosophers did not constitute any danger to the 'fundamentals of religion' as he says,⁷⁰ and neither to the state – the state on behalf of which he spoke. There were *no* philosophers in his time *at all*. Ibn Sīnā died in AH 428, that is, sixty years *before* al-Ghazālī composed his book *The Incoherence of Philosophers* (AH 488) and there was no other philosopher, so where do these 'tribulations' come from? Nowhere else but from the esoteric Bāṭiniyah. And what is truly noteworthy is that al-Ghazālī composed the books *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (*The Intentions of Philosophers*); *Tabāfut al-*

Falāsifah (*The Incoherence of Philosophers*) and *Faḍā'il al-Bāṭinīyah* (*The Outrages of Esotericism*); *Hujjat al-Ḥaq* (*The Authority of the Truth*) – as a response to esotericism also–; *Mi'yar al-'Ilm* (*The Criterion of Knowledge*); *Maḥak al-Nazar* (*Touchstone of Reasoning*) – as an invitation to adopt logic – and al-Ghazālī worked on the composition of all of these books during the same period of time which is determined to have fallen between AH 477–488, namely two years after the assassination of the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk by one of the 'paramilitaries' of the Bāṭinīyah movement. And since al-Ghazālī had written on the rebuttal of esotericism at the command of the caliph, as he himself confirms, why should we not assume that this was commanded of him immediately after the assassination of Niẓām al-Mulk? Consequently, could this assassination and the subsequent terror and turmoil in the Seljuq state and among its men, of whom al-Ghazālī was one, have been what he termed the 'difficulties' which had stimulated him to compose *The Incoherence of Philosophers*? In addition to the above, if we consider that al-Ghazālī was targeting Ibn Sīnā in particular in his response, and that the philosophy of this latter was organically related to Ismā'īli philosophy, as we have previously demonstrated, and that al-Ghazālī's intention was not restricted to depicting the haste and contradiction of philosophers because of their commitment to the conditions of inferential evidence, as he says, but he went so far as to issue a legal *fatwā* against them and considered them unbelievers in regard to three issues and heretics in regard to another seventeen, as is well known. If we consider all these things, we will realise how *The Incoherence of Philosophers* and *The Outrages of Esotericism* are two aspects of a single reaction, a *political* reaction against the Ismā'īli trend.

And here we ought to go back to his intellectual crisis to shed some light upon it. Al-Ghazālī mentioned that he was a *victim* of this crisis 'for almost six months beginning in the month of Rajab in AH 488',⁷¹ and this had occurred to him when he was intent on the views of the Bāṭinīyah and the views of philosophers and responding to them. So, why this association: was this crisis not due to the fact that he found himself compelled to invalidate views towards which he was inclined, or believed were correct in some aspects? His casuistic departure from Baghdad (in order to liberate himself from correlation with the state and the commands of the caliph and the necessity to 'serve') on the pretext that he was travelling to Mecca for pilgrimage, while – in fact – he was heading towards *Syria*, can only be explained by one thing: it is that his real crisis was a crisis of choices between remaining affiliated with the state and the liberation from it, and there are some researchers who explain his walk out of Baghdad by his fear for his life because his writings against esotericism 'had not earned the satisfaction

of the caliph as they were more prone to *supporting* esotericism than they were to attacking it'.⁷² As for the early scholars, it did not evade their minds to note the influence of the views of philosophers and esotericism on al-Ghazālī's thought and mysticism. The Sunni jurist Abū Bakr bin al-ʿArabī, who was a contemporary of al-Ghazālī, said: 'Our sheikh Abū Ḥamid had swallowed the philosophers and intended to disgorge them, but he could not.' Whereas Ibn Taymīyah had noticed that al-Ghazālī indicates in some of his books some sayings he considers 'the secrets of true things (*asrār al-ḥaqāʾiq*)' insinuated in some verses of the Qurʾān, while these sayings are – Ibn Taymīyah says – 'verbatim quotes of Sabaen philosophising but modified in terminology and their classifications' and that he, namely al-Ghazālī, 'was inclined to philosophy but he exhibited it in a Sufi form and Islamic terminology' and further that it 'was mentioned in some accounts that he called for esoteric doctrine, which finds credible confirmation in his books'.⁷³

In fact, al-Ghazālī had adopted through his 'Sufism' Hermetic religious philosophy in all of its basic suppositions. And if al-Ghazālī was not acquainted directly with Hermetic sources, undoubtedly, he had derived the concept of 'the resigned reason' from Ibn Sīnā and esotericism and its philosophers and in particular from Sufis such as al-Baṣṭāmī, al-Junayd, al-Ḥallāj and others. The following examples show the extent of how deeply al-Ghazālī was involved in Hermetism when he was setting the stage for the crisis of Arab reason.

Al-Ghazālī had adopted the Hermetic theory concerning the classes of existence and had presented it in several books and according to different formulas. For example, he says: 'the most creative of all is reason [the absolute] which is created by [God] by a "command" with no prior matter or time and it is only preceded by the "command" and the "command" is not to be preceded by the Lord Almighty [. . .] and what is below reason is the soul, and it is preceded by reason, and reason is more advanced from it by itself and not by time [. . .] and the soul is precedent to time and temporal things and is not affected by time, but time and eternity begin with it, I mean with its passion for the perfection of reason.'⁷⁴ Al-Ghazālī does not hesitate in employing Hermetic terminology when he says that reason (absolute) 'was coupled – with the soul – so it produced matter directly inspired by reason and the soul and the multitude had occurred by thrice', namely reason, the soul and the *hyle*, and the classes of existence had come to consist of ten: 'one is the word, second is reason, third is the soul, fourth is the *hyle*, fifth is nature, sixth is the body, seventh are the planets, eighth are the four elements, ninth are the generators and tenth is the human being.'⁷⁵ And here, is it not that this presentation of

al-Ghazālī on the eternity of the world corresponds to the utterances of philosophers whom he had considered unbelievers?

Moreover, what al-Ghazālī calls here ‘command’ (*al-amr*) and ‘word’ (*al-kalimah*) and what he calls elsewhere ‘the one to be obeyed’ (*al-muṭāʿ*) is nothing else but what Numenius calls ‘God the Maker’ considered – as we have seen in Chapter Eight – by Neo-Platonism and the Hermetic religious philosophy to be in juxtaposition to ‘the supreme transcendent God’. Al-Ghazālī says that ‘veiled’ from the realisation of the reality of the divine self are three groups: a group which does not admit the existence of God or the Last Day because they say that nothing exists but nature and eternity, thus, the darkness of nature concealed these people’s sight from perceiving God; and a group which believes in the existence of God but they have a misconception of His essence because they rely on the senses or the imagination or the corrupt measures of reason, so they imagine God as a body or assimilate Him with His creatures or analogise His qualities with the qualities of humans as theologians do. So all these people are veiled from the knowledge of the truth of God by ‘a light enveloped by darkness’ (namely by a reason afflicted with the senses). As for the third group, they are those who imagine God a pure perception of reason, they are the philosophers, and they are ranked highest. Some of them avoided cognising God through attributing certain qualities to Him such as knowledge, power or the ability to hear and speak, and they have preferred to cognise Him through His effects in His creatures. And some of them have done better in a small measure and asserted that the Lord is the Mover of the farthest celestial bodies turning in their orbits, thus, He is the Prime Mover. Some have aspired to a higher level than all of these and asserted that it is inadmissible that the Lord would be the originator of the world directly, but that it must be done through an intermediary of one of the angels who obeys God in His commands, and consider that God is the one to be obeyed: He is obeyed by this angel-mover of the world. All these are concealed – according to al-Ghazālī – ‘by mere lights’, and implied here is that even if they have been spared, in their cognisance of God, from sense and imagination, still the philosophers remained prisoners of *reason* and its method of cognising things.

As for those who do not have any veil of concealment between themselves and the Lord, these are ‘those who are in communion – *al-wāṣilūn*’. They see that the ‘obeyed’ is not the Lord himself, but another divine being distinct from ‘the One the Most High’ above all descriptions. These ‘*wāṣilūn* . . . it is also clear for them that this obeyed one is qualified in a contradictory manner to pure unification and the extreme perfection’,

the thing that means that there is no absolute unity in divinity but there is a necessary intrinsic *duality*. And this is because ‘the One the Most High’ cannot be considered the mover of the world (and consequently cannot not be considered as knowing particulars), but the ‘obeyed’ is the one who moves the heavens and the farthest celestial bodies, etc. As for the attribution of this ‘obeyed’ to ‘the One the Most High’, the One above all similitude, is similar to the attribution of the light of the sun to the sun itself. And from these lights, namely from the ‘obeyed’ orients the *wāṣilūn*, ‘so they arrive at an existence which is far above everything apprehended by the sight of their hearts, so the lights of his visage (the One the Most High) have burned away all what was realised by the sight and perspicacity of the seers as they have found Him the Most Holy and far above every description we have given Him previously’, namely every quality, thus, ‘the One the Most High’ for al-Ghazālī is only recognised by negation, precisely as the Hermetic philosophy asserts.⁷⁶

As for the ‘*wāṣilūn*’, they consist of three categories: ‘for some all what their sight had realised had been burned up and had vanished and gone, but still they were able to notice beauty and holiness, and notice the beauty of his essence which he had achieved by reaching the divine presence, so the perceived waned but not the perceiver. A group exceeded these and they are the essences of the essence, so the lights of His visage burned them up and they were entranced by the Possessor of all majesty, so they waned and vanished by themselves, and they have ceased unto themselves for they have sacrificed themselves in self-annihilation and all that was left was the One Truth . . . and some of them had not attained these heights of ascent . . . so they race at the first glance to know holiness and disdain divinity . . . thus revelation besieges them all at once, and the features of His face burn away all that physical and mental sight might perceive.’⁷⁷ As for al-Ghazālī, his words imply that he had considered himself among the second category, ‘the essence of the essence’, those belonging to the concept of the unity of existence, those who ‘had seen with the naked eye that there is nothing existing except for God’⁷⁸ as he says. (So then, after all this, is there any more room to consider ‘the gathering of bodies (like insects) [in this sense, ‘bodily resurrection’ on the Day of Judgement]’, which is the third matter employed by al-Ghazālī to accuse the philosophers of unbelief. So we must refrain from saying that Hermetic mysticism is based on the denial of bodies in the world before the afterlife, in addition moreover, to asserting self-annihilation and unification and the oneness of existence as is predicating on the ‘melting’ (*al-dhawabān*) of the souls themselves . . .).

So al-Ghazālī had adopted, in his books that he had composed after *The Incoherence of Philosophers* and *The Outrages of Esotericism*, the same suppositions according to which he considered philosophers to be unbelievers: believing in the eternity of the world, that God does not know particulars; and the denial of the gathering of bodies (i.e., bodily ‘resurrection’).⁷⁹ He adopted these suppositions, yet not in an *a posteriori* manner nor in an ‘illuminationist’ or esoteric manner; and that was through imparting to these a Qur’ānic rhetorical form which he disseminated in his books that he composed for the ‘elite’, his books that ‘are useless for those who are not initiated’, as he says. The one sole issue over which al-Ghazālī continued to be against philosophers all the way – even though he had not considered them unbelievers because of it – is the matter of causality (*al-sababīyah*), the central issue of reason itself: al-Ghazālī vehemently and consistently denied causation and, thus, he divested ‘proof’ (*al-burhān*) in its *context* and adhered to its *form* (that is, analogy in debate) in order to employ it for the protection of the context of ‘*al-bayān*’ as advocated by the Ash‘arites. And this is the basis of the ‘technique of the later scholars’ which al-Ghazālī had fully consecrated in theology, and which we will discuss in the next chapter. As for now, we will see how al-Ghazālī reconciles between his ‘rhetoric’ Ash‘arite and his gnostic mysticism.

Al-Ghazālī presents in his book *Jawābir al-Qur’ān* (*The Essences of the Qur’ān*) a Hermetic reading of the Qur’ān and its linguistic and religious knowledge, a Hermetic reading in every sense of the word where he employs Hermetic ‘alchemical’ and religious concepts. He begins with the classification of the Qur’ānic verses and *sūrah*s into two categories: the first includes the *sūrah*s and verses ‘important examples and fundamentals’ and these are of three kinds: one kind includes the definition of the one invoked (Allāh: His essential self, qualities and actions); another kind includes the identification of the mode of conduct to reach Him (i.e., acts of worship); and a third kind includes identification of the state achieved upon reaching Him (mention of paradise and hell). The second category of *sūrah*s and verses is ‘enriching and perfecting similes and devotions’, and this is of three kinds: one kind includes the identification of the status of followers of His path such as prophets and holy men and the status of those who rebelled including tyrants such as Pharaoh (the stories of the prophets); another kind includes the responses to unbelievers (argumentation with infidels); and a third kind includes an explanation of architecture and the method of deriving [Islamic law] – *al-zād* (limits and ordinances, i.e., the *sharī‘ah*).

And on this basis, al-Ghazālī compares the Qur’ān to a shell filled with

pearls and classifies the linguistic and religious knowledge in correspondence with the layers of the shell, starting from the outer shell to the core: there is first the knowledge of the outer shell, and it ranges from the visible outer shell inwards to its centre close to the core as follows: 1– the knowledge of phonation and vocalisation (the recitation of the Qurʾān); this is the knowledge of ‘the visible shell’; 2– the knowledge of the language of the Qurʾān (the *outré* of the Qurʾān); 3– the knowledge of grammar of the Qurʾān (syntax and declension); 4– the knowledge of reading (the seven readings); 5– the knowledge of the interpretation of the manifest (which is the internal layer of the shell tangent to the pearl ‘over which many had been convinced’). Secondly, there is the knowledge of the core which consists of two layers: the first includes 1– the knowledge of the stories of the Qurʾān; 2– the knowledge of the argumentation against the infidels (theology); 3– the knowledge of the boundaries and ordinances (*fiqh*; and *fuqahāʾ* with correspondence to the path towards Allāh, for instance, corresponding to the religious stations and stages on the way to pilgrimage to Mecca; as for the stations *mutakallimūn* the guards of pilgrims). And the second layer includes: 1– the knowledge of conduct (Sufism; and al-Ghazālī had explained it in his book: *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*); 2– the knowledge of the afterlife – the afterlife of the soul; 3– and then ‘the holy knowledge’ which is the awareness of God through ascending towards Him from actions towards qualities and from qualities towards the self, and al-Ghazālī had incorporated some of this knowledge as he says in his books he had composed for the elite: (the texts that we have previously conveyed from his books concerning his views on reason, the soul, the matter, the orbits and angels, and in particular his theory on the ‘obeyed’ and the devotion and the oneness of existence).

As for the knowledge of the ‘outer shell’ and the knowledges of the ‘manifest’ (*al-ẓāhir*), these are for the masses, whereas the knowledge of the core and the knowledges of the ‘esoteric’ (*al-bāṭin*), are for the elite, and the elite of the elite. In other words, al-Ghazālī had left the *bayān* for the masses, yet, concerning the elite, he had endowed them with the *ʿirfān*. However, al-Ghazālī had not decisively distinguished between the ‘masses’ and the ‘elite’, and consequently, he had not considered a break between *bayān* and *ʿirfān* but he rendered *bayān* a method whereby to attain *ʿirfān* just as the ‘masses’ were a vessel for the ‘elite’. Thus, just as al-Ghazālī had taken content from the *bayān* and *form* from the *burhān* – saying that such was for the masses, so he had taken *form* from the *bayān* and content from the *ʿirfān* saying that such was for the essence [i.e., the elite]. However,

that which al-Ghazālī had insisted on invalidating is the content of the ‘proof,’ which is the causation, and consequently mental and mathematical knowledge as well as natural knowledge. Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī had not only invalidated knowledge epistemologically, but he had invalidated it sociologically and historically as well.

He says after ending the presentation of the ‘knowledge of the apparent’ and the ‘knowledge of the core’: ‘you might say that knowledges behind these are multiple such as the science of medicine, astrology, the composition of the world, the physical composition of the human body and the autopsy of its members, wizardry, enigmas and other, so you must know that we have indicated the religious knowledges that must have their origin in the world in order to be able to follow the path of Allāh almighty and travel towards Him. As for the knowledges that we have referred to, they are [mere] knowledge, but cognizing them does not depend on the good conduct and the afterlife and therefore we have not mentioned them.’⁸⁰

Indeed, the ‘resigned reason’ had invaded al-Ghazālī’s jurisprudence and theology. Hermetism, ‘fleeing’ from the world, had dominated the theologian jurist who had struggled for the world and religion not just at the epistemological level, but at the religious and Islamic-national level as well, the level of the duty for *jihad* and the obligation to cover the weaknesses. A contemporary writer says: ‘we note that during the last part of his life, the epidemic [plague] of Crusaders had come to the land of Islam and Arabs, when this plague had swept the land from the north to south and the Crusaders had committed the most heinous of acts such as murder, arson, destruction, taking captives and plunder, and they had occupied al-Quds [Jerusalem] and the horrifying news had reached Baghdad where al-Ghazālī was living, yet he had not moved nor was he affected as we see. He had lived after the occupation of al-Quds by the Crusaders in AH 495 for over ten years, however, we do not see him impelled to fight them or inciting against them. This reprehensible attitude increases against al-Ghazālī when it was cited that Sufis, whom he defended, took a negative position *vis-à-vis* the battles of the Crusaders, as many have thought that these wars were a punishment from God almighty to the Muslims for they were sinners and evildoers.’ However, the writer of these lines ends his argument by saying: ‘whatever the accountability of al-Ghazālī for this issue or the other, we remember finally the famous words: “it is sufficient to count a person’s blunders so that one may know how noble that person is”.’⁸¹ So, do we need to mention, after this saying, that the domination of the ‘resigned reason’ in al-Ghazālī has left a deep wound inside Arab

reason, which is still bleeding, significantly, in many Arab ‘reasons’ up to this moment?

Nonetheless, al-Ghazālī was neither the beginning nor the end: time in Arab reason is moving, so shall we turn over the page to see other pages.

Notes

1. Here al-Jabri is referring with the expression *tashrī‘ li-l-musharri‘* to the set of initiatives in the Islamic sphere – and especially in the arena of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) to set the governing principles for use of the rational intellect or reason (*al-‘aql*) in derivation and determination of Islamic law (*al-sharī‘ah*). With the codification of al-Shāfa‘ī, the jurist – among others – discovered the need for a critical device or apparatus. Up until roughly his time, *fiqh* only admitted three sources within the law: the Qur’ān, the *sunnah* as transmitted in the *ḥadīth* literature, and *ijmā‘* or ‘consensus’ of the Prophet’s Companions and second-generation followers as well as that of the scholars, which had primarily a confirmatory role. At that time, apart from *ijmā‘*, there was no critical device to resolve contradictions or disparity within transmitted tradition (*al-naql*) – especially in regard to the accounts of the *ḥadīth* which – with spurious additions – were actually *expanding* in number over time as can be ascertained simply by a comparison of the *quantity* of *ḥadīth* known to Mālik and those reported by Ibn Ḥanbal. Reason (*al-‘aql*) had yet to be admitted as a legitimate device and means of resolving these issues or legitimising one ruling over another. Appeal to reason seemed the only way to reconcile sources which were sometimes patently contradictory, but first reason itself and recourse to it had to be *legitimised* – to be rendered Islamic-legal (i.e., *shar‘ī*) – before it could serve as arbiter or legitimiser – *al-musharri‘*. [Editor.]

2. Ibn Khāllikān, *Wafīyāt al-A‘yān* (Cairo: [n.pb.], 1948), p. 239.

3. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, pp. 263–264.

4. See the text of the debate between Sīrāfī and Mattā in *al-Imtinā‘ wa al-Mu‘ānasah* (evening eight) by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī.

5. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā’ al-‘Ulūm*, pp. 77 and 68.

6. ‘Abd al-Qāhīr al-Jurjānī, *Dala’il al-I‘jāz*, p. 242, Rashīd Riḍā version.

7. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Ṣawn al-Manṭiq wa al-Kalām . . .*, p. 48, published by Sāmī al-Nashshār and Su‘ād ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Azhar 1970.

8. Ibn Taymīyah wrote *al-Radd ‘alā al-Manṭiqīyīn*, printed and summarised by al-Suyūṭī in the second part of the above-mentioned book, and another book entitled *Naqd al-Manṭiq*. As for his ideological motives, it is to resist esotericism and its philosophy in the person of Ibn Sīnā and his divinities and logic.

9. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtinā‘ wa al-Mu‘ānasah*, evening seventeen (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt), pp. 6–20, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zayn, three parts in one book.

10. See the text of the letter in *Kitāb al-Mubāḥathāt* included in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Aristū ‘Inda al-‘Arab* (Kuwait: the agency of publications, 1978), p. 119 and on.

11. Ibn Sīnā addresses the person to whom the letter is destined by using the word *Kiya*, a Persian nickname for glorification, as well as the tacit person is used to address him in a glorifying manner. And it is believed that the intended person was his disciple Abū al-Ḥasan Bahmanyār al-Marzabān (d. 430); Ibn Sīnā used to call him *Kiya*.

12. Ibn Sīnā was a minister to 'Alā' of the Buyid dynasty called Kaquiya, and was present with him at several battles mentioned by Ibn Sīnā.

13. Published by the Salafiyyah Press of Cairo 1920, then reprinted by Dār al-Ḥadāthah, Beirut 1982. See our opinion on this issue in our study on Avicenna and his Orientalist philosophy in *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*, 2nd edn, p. 231 n. 10.

14. Ibn Sīnā, *Manṭiq al-Mashriqīyīn* (Dār al-Ḥadāthah, 1982), pp. 19–22.

15. Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Shifā'*, the preface of part one of the logic.

16. Published in our book *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*.

17. Aristotle says: 'the active reason of all people was in terms of its bounds and instinct similar to light: thus, the image renders the colours coercively appear as real colours. And this active reason is separate from the essence of the *hyle* and is unknown and undifferentiated with anything and the subject is always more honourable than the object and the principle is more dignified than the *hyle* that is the condition of the active reason as well. As for the mind that has the same status of power it is distinctly older in time, but timeless as a whole. I am not saying that it does so or does not every time, but it is what it is, separate from what it was, thusly it became spiritual and immortal. And the thing that drove us to assert that this mind is not impossible or it does not suffer, is that delusion is the suffering reason and that it ruins and does not realise the reason and does not comprehend anything without delusion.' Aristotle, *Kitāb al-Nafs*, trans Ishāq bin Ḥunayn, p. 75, published by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī along with other texts under the same title, *Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah*, Cairo 1954.

18. Yūsuf Karam, *Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-Yunānīyah* (Cairo: the committee of writing and translation, 1958), pp. 302–303.

19. Ibn Sīnā, *Risālah fī Ma'rifat al-Nafs al-Nāṭiqah wa Aḥwālībā*, published by Albert Naṣrī Nādir, *Ibn Sīnā wa al-Nafs al-Basharīyah* (Beirut: Dār 'Uwaydāt, 1960), pp. 29 ff.

20. Albert Naṣrī Nādir, p. 29, comment 1.

21. See *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt* with the explanation of Naṣrī al-Dīn al-Tūsī, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1960), p. 166 n. 3.

22. *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt*, p. 32.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 150 ff.

24. Published by the Orientalist Mirn Blidan, 1899.

25. Henri Corbin, *Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-Islāmīyah*, p. 277.

26. Al-Ghazālī, *Tabāfut al-Falāsifah*, fourth introduction.

27. *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity Risā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1967), p. 171.

28. See our view on the issue in our study on Avicenna and his Oriental philosophy, paragraph six. *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*, Version 2, 1982, p. 204.

29. Refer to chapter eight.

30. For more details on this issue, see Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Dawlah al-Fātimīyah* (Cairo: al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah library, 1958).

31. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 188. See also *A'qām al-Dawlah al-Ismā'īliyah*, p. 366, Muṣṭafā Ghālib. Dār al-Yaqazah al-'Arabīyah, Beirut 1964.

32. Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Dawlah al-Fātimīyah*, p. 470.

33. Muṣṭafā Ghālib, Dār al-Yaqazah al-'Arabīyah, p. 338.

34. According to our resources, two books by Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī were published: *Kitāb al-Yanābī'* and *Kitāb Ithbāt al-Nubuwwah*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib.

35. Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, op. cit. p. 69, and also pp. 467 ff.

36. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Al-Imtā' wa al-Mu'ānasah*, p. 15.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

38. See the comment by Aḥmad Amīn, op. cit., p. 26 n. 1.
39. Ibid., p. 15.
40. In the life story of Ibn Sīnā as cited by his disciple Abū 'Ubayd al-Jurjānī, and it had been reported by Ibn Abū Uṣayba'ah and al-Qifṭī. And Ibn Khallikān, p. 152, mentions that Ibn Sīnā had reached a point of burning the aforementioned library so that he would be the only one to have acquired from it and to attribute such to himself.
41. *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity (Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā)*, op. cit., p. 171.
42. Al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, *Al-Waṣāyā' au al-Naṣā'ih*, pp. 27–32, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā, version of Muḥammad 'Alī Subayḥ, Cairo 1964.
43. Reviewed by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and published by Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, Cairo 1966.
44. Published along with another letter for al-Muḥāsibī as *Kitāb Fahm al-Qur'ān wa Ma'āniḥ* Ḥusayn al-Quwwatī with a long introduction on the life of Muḥāsibī, and its intellectual development in one book, *al-'Aql wa Fahm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1971).
45. The letter: Ma'hīyat al-'Aql, op. cit., p. 20.
46. Ishāq bin Wahab, *Al-burhān fi Wajh al-bayān*, p. 60. We will come back to the analysis of the meaning of the rhetoric device and its kinds and mechanisms in the third part of this book.
47. Ḥusayn al-Quwwatī, *Al-'Aql wa Fihm al-Qur'ān* by Muḥāsibī, pp. 31 ff.
48. Abū al-'Alā' 'Afifī, *Al-Taṣawwuf: al-Thawrah al-Rūḥīyah fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Dar al-Sha'b, [n.d.]), p. 106.
49. Muṣṭafā Kāmil al-Shaybī, *Al-Ṣilah bayn al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Tashayyū'* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, [n.d.]), p. 349.
50. Ibid., for details, Section three.
51. Ibid.
52. Al-Kalabādhi. *Al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1980), p. 20.
53. Ibid., p. 22.
54. Ibid: from the fifth to the twenty-eighth section.
55. Section twenty-nine.
56. See the introduction written by As'ad 'Abd al-Ḥād Qindil in the translation from Persian of the book *Qashf al-Mahjūb* by Hajwayrī (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyah, 1980).
57. See *Sirāj al-Mulūk* by Ṭarṭūshī, p. 267.
58. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*: we have adopted this version ed. Jamīl Ṣalībāh and Kāmil 'Ayyād, tenth edition (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1981), pp. 78–82.
59. Al-Sabkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah*, Cairo, pp. 269–272.
60. Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā'ih al-Bātinīyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Kuwait : Dār al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyah institute), p. 3. See also *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl*, p. 118.
61. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Munqidh . . .*, pp. 103–104.
62. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm*, ed. Victor Shalḥat (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1959).
63. Al-Ghazālī, *Jawābir al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1981), p. 21.
64. Al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār al-'Ilm*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1961).
65. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustaṣfā fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Cairo: Cairo Press AH 1392), p. 10.
66. Al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār al-'Ilm*, p. 176.
67. Ibid., p. 182. See also *al-Mustaṣfā*, p. 144; and *Maqāsid al-Falāsifah*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1961), p. 101; and *Maḥāk al-Nazar*, ed. Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn al-Tilmisānī (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-Ḥadīthah, 1966), p. 57; and *Al-*

Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād, ed. ʿAdil al-ʿAwwā (Beirut: Dār al-Amānah, 1969), p. 81.

68. Yūsuf Karam, *Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-Yūnānīyah* (Cairo: the committee of writing, translation and publication, 1958), p. 130.

69. Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿarif, 1966), pp. 82–83.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

71. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Muntaqid*, p. 136; And in some copies, it has been said that his crisis had begun in 486 (see note 2, *op. cit.* same page) and if this is true, this crisis would be the direct result of the assassination of Niẓām al-Mulk in AH 485, and consequently it would be a crisis with political motives.

72. Aḥmad al-Sharbāṣī, Al-Ghazālī *wa al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, [n.d.]), p. 41.

73. Ibn Taymīyah, *Al-Fatāwā* (Rabat: Dār al-Maʿrifah library, [n.d.]), pp. 63–66.

74. Al-Ghazālī, *Maʿārij al-Quds fī Madārij al-Nafs* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyah, [n.d.]), p. 152.

75. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maʿarif al-ʿAqlīyah*, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1963), pp. 29–30.

76. Al-Ghazālī says, ‘The truth is what the late Junayd said: No person cognises God but God. As for our utterance concerning the obligation to exist, it consists of an abandonment of the cause and effect, and this is due to the extraction of the cause from it.’ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, p. 18.

77. Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, ed. Abu al-ʿUlā ʿAfīfī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmīyah li al-Ṭibāʿah wa al-Nashr, 1964), pp. 84–93.

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56. See also his book *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, pp. 18 ff, (Casablanca: Dār al-Ṭibāʿah al-Ḥadīthah), also his *Jawābir al-Qurʾān*, pp. 18 ff. See also *Talmīḥāt fī Ihyaʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*.

79. Earlier scholars have noticed that al-Ghazālī had adopted the opinions of the philosophers on the same issue he had considered them unfaithful. And if some of them have depended on his utterance in his book *ʿAl-Maḍmūn bih ʿalā Ghayr Ahlih*, thus his other books we have depended upon here confirm this issue. Al-Ghazālī even went beyond when he avowed the dualism of divinity in his theory on ‘the obeyed’ which means ‘God the maker’ for the Hermetic philosophers. Therefore, there is no room for scepticism on this issue – either partially or totally, as asserted by the editors of the *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* to prove (see *al-Munqidh*, *op. cit.* Al-Ghazālī).

80. Al-Ghazālī, *Jawābir al-Qurʾān*, p. 25.

81. Aḥmad al-Sharbāṣī, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

CHAPTER 12

A New Beginning . . . However!

Andalusia: New Directions

Contemporary Arab historians classify the ‘Abbāsīd state into three periods. The first ‘Abbāsīd period stretches between the date of the foundation of this state immediately after the fall of the Umayyads in AH 132 and the date that marks the beginning of the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil in AH 230. This period is roughly equivalent to what is known historically as ‘the Era of Codification and Translation (Arabicisation)’ which we have considered a general referential framework for our study. The second ‘Abbāsīd period runs from AH 232, the year in which al-Mutawakkil inaugurated his caliphate, until AH 447, the year of the demise of Buyid (also Buwāyhid) influence in Baghdad, the dynasty which had ruled in the name of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph. The third ‘Abbāsīd period begins when the Seljuqs entered Baghdad in AH 447/CE 1055, and who replaced the Buyids ruling until AH 656/ CE 158, the year when Baghdad was sacked by Hulagu [the grandson of Ghengis Khan], leader of the Tatars – or the Mongols – and the transfer of the ‘Abbāsīd state to Cairo, where it remained a mere name devoid of content until AH 923, when al-Mutawakkil ‘Alā-Allāh, the last ‘Abbāsīd caliph, ceded the ‘right to the imamate’ to the Ottoman Sultan Selim I when the latter entered Egypt as a conqueror.

According to this ‘political’ classification, authors distinguish, in Arab cultural history in its various branches, between three periods of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty: the first phase of the ‘Abbāsīd era, the second and the third. Yet we have embarked on this study starting from a basic premise, that is, that Arab culture consists of a single cultural period comprised of the periods before and after the Era of Codification.

Perhaps the previous chapters were sufficiently clear that the Arab cultural period – at least along the three ‘Abbāsīd phases’ we have explained so far, namely, the Era of Codification which denotes the first ‘Abbāsīd period, until the period of al-Ghazālī which denotes the third ‘Abbāsīd period – remained unchanged, vacillating between three epistemological systems, which collided with and overlapped each other; as a result, Arab thought did not have the opportunity to achieve a rupture with any of them, nor could it reorganise the nexus between these systems in a manner that would permit the inauguration of a new beginning that could serve as a clear line of demarcation between what came before and what after. This was concerning *cultural* history. As for *political* history, the aforementioned classification does not actually reflect historical ‘moments’ unless things are perceived from the standpoint of the authority of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph *vis-à-vis* the power and influence practised by certain groups and families who used to rule on his behalf, or rather from the standpoint of the religious or ethnic affiliation of these groups or families (Persians-Barmakids, Turkomans, Buyids, Seljuqs). But if we were to perceive the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate as an institution exercising authority over society under the pretext of ‘religion’ and ‘history’, namely under a particular ideological cover, and working towards maintaining its own authority and edifice, confronting, or at least resisting, ruthlessly all those who claimed the caliphate or those who rebelled against it, we would find that the aforementioned ‘phases’ were, in fact, a unitary ‘politico-ideological history’. And that is attributable to the fact that from the rise of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty up until the day it collapsed the ‘other’, that claimed its authority and struggled with it ideologically, remained the same, that is, the Shi‘ah: whether they were organised in the form of an opposition movement, in a clandestine or overt form, or in the form of statelets with varying degrees of influence and sovereignty, or whether existing as a rival caliphate plaguing the ‘Abbāsīd state at every step: the Fāṭimid caliphate.

Even after the collapse of the Fāṭimid state in AH 567, the Ismā‘īli Shi‘ites and their affiliate esoteric streams continued to constitute, through their organisations their movements and their ideology, the ‘other’ who competed with the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate and whoever ruled on its behalf. And the situation remained as such even during the period when the ‘Abbāsīd caliph resided in Cairo, nominally. This ‘other’ remained the ‘invariable’ constant that accompanied all political ‘transitions’ that occurred in the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty. And since this ‘other’ was basically an *ideological* opponent, as it always preserved the same ideological bases for its political movements, the ‘Abbāsīd state and all of the families that

ruled on its behalf, persevered as well the same ideological bases that justified its religious and historical existence. Hence, its ideological and political period remained the same – *unchanged*.

This ‘new’ terminology, namely ‘the politico-ideological history’, which we will add to the list of procedural concepts employed in this study, will enable us to develop a clearer perception of what we will present here as other ‘pages’ of the Arab cultural period, the undulating one, and it will assist in controlling the two contradictory phenomena governing Arab cultural history, as we elucidated in Chapter Two the phenomenon of the ‘overlap’ in all cultural periods within Arab thought on the one hand, and the phenomenon of the isolation from time and space within Arab cultural history on the other.

To control this phenomenon means to avoid falling into the multiplicity that characterises current Arab cultural history (multiculturalism) which makes it a set of distinct parallel ‘histories’, separated from each other due to the impact of the second phenomenon, on the one hand, and to highlight the overlap between Arab cultural periods in the context of the *entire* Arab cultural period on the other hand. We said that the entire ‘Abbāsīd dynasty had known only one politico-ideological period, mainly because the ‘other’, upon whom the political actions of that state were contingent, had remained the same, ‘invariable’, during all the transitions it had known, and that this ‘other’ was made up of the esoteric Shī‘ites of the *bāṭiniyah*. Yet, the esoteric Shī‘ah, and in particular the Fāṭimid state, did not constitute the ‘other’ for the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate alone. Indeed, a number of sovereign states cropped up, early on in the western Muslim world, independent of both caliphates, the ‘Abbāsīd and the Fāṭimid. For instance, the Idrisid dynasty (AH 172–375), which was the first state to secede from ‘Abbāsīd rule, was established in the Maghreb. And, as it is well known, the ‘Abbāsīds took full control of power and used it against the Alawites, their allies in the revolution against the Umayyads. The Alawites (i.e., Shī‘ites), in a desperate reaction, rebelled in Mecca and Medina in a revolution that was extinguished by the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Hādī in a wadi by the name of Fakh (a ravine on the way to Mecca), after which the Alawites became disparate. One of them, Idrīs bin ‘Abdullah, managed to escape to the Maghreb where he gained the support of local tribes, which marked the inception of the Idrisid dynasty which announced its independence from the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate.

And on the other hand, the prince ‘Abdul Raḥmān bin Mu‘āwiyah bin Hishām bin ‘Abd al-Malik bin Marwān, known as ‘Abdul Raḥmān al-Dākhil, fled to Andalusia immediately after the collapse of the Umayyad

dynasty, where he founded an Umayyad state in AH 138 in an attempt to establish a state in the form of the previous Umayyad one in the East. Thus, the Maghreb and Andalusia were finally outside the realm of the 'Abbāsid state, as each of them became independent. And despite the vigilance and rivalry that prevailed in the relation between the two young neighbouring states, since one of them was Alawite (i.e., Shī'ite in name at least) and the other one Marwānid (Umayyad), the 'other' for both was one, and that was the 'Abbāsid state. Hence, a new 'political period' began in the Maghreb and Andalusia, which was independent from the 'Abbāsid political period in the East. And when the Ismā'īli Shī'ites succeeded in establishing their own state in Africa (Ifriqīyā) and Egypt (i.e., the Fāṭimid state), the Umayyads in Andalusia became threatened by another 'other', which was the Fāṭimid caliphate itself, especially given that it had partisans and allies in the Maghreb such as the Sanhajas in the south and the Ḥammadids who had their own principalities in the northern Maghreb and southern Andalusia (al-Jazīrah al-Khaḍrā' – lit., the Green Island) and who were Alawites affiliated to Idrīs bin 'Abdullah, founder of the Idrisid state.

And so, the Umayyad state had two historical foes in Andalusia, the 'Abbāsid caliphate and the Fāṭimid caliphate, and both constituted the 'other' for it, and that rendered its political period a single period independent of the 'Abbāsid political period or the Fāṭimid political period. Since these latter two are both founded on rival ideologies, the Umayyad political period in Andalusia was necessarily against both of them, and consequently it would seek its own ideological basis.

However, the establishment of a new ideology (even if it is constrained by the adoption of a distinct position within the grand religious circle of Islam, as is the case here) could not be achieved rapidly as might be the case when establishing a principality or founding a state. The ideological transition, at the level of state and the society, requires a longer period and it can only be achieved over the span of generations. If we note that the long distance that separates Andalusia from the centre of the rival ideological streams in Islam (Shī'ite, Mu'tazilite, Ash'arite) made the echoes of these streams faint and superficial – the same might be applied in the Maghreb where the Idrisid state was Shī'ite but only in terms of genealogy, whereas in terms of religious *practice* the *ṭarīqat al-salaf* (lit., the method of the pious ancestors) transmitted by the original conquerors was prevalent. If we add to all this what we have indicated in Chapter Seven, that the Islamic conquests had completely 'wiped the slate clean' in the Maghreb and Andalusia – where there was no role for the 'structure of ancient

beliefs' in shaping the political events and intellectual streams in these lands after Islam had settled there – if we combine all these factors together, we will realise that Andalusia would continue, like the Maghreb, to follow the 'method of the pious ancestors' transmitted by the early conquerors and adopted by the Umayyad governors, as it was the same 'method' that had prevailed in the East during the Umayyad dynasty. It is Sunni ideology in its initial form prior to its Ash'arite version. Therefore, if the Umayyads in Andalusia adopted the same 'radical' Sunni ideology that was prevalent there before the establishment of their new state, they were actually adopting the same ideology of their previous state in the East, and this would ensure continuity of their presence at the intellectual level. If we keep in mind that the 'Abbāsīd state had employed Mu'tazilite and Aristotelian philosophy and then, subsequently, the Ash'arite religious creed in its ideological struggle against the Bāṭiniyah, we will realise how the Umayyads in Andalusia would move politically against all their opponents, that which implies that the process of 'evolution' which would occur with Sunni ideology in Andalusia for the purpose of establishing a new ideological system particular to the Umayyads would be achieved in a direction distinct from all the aforementioned opponents.

Hence the so-called phenomenon of *tazammūt al-fuqahā'* (loosely translated as 'the pedantry of jurists') and the rejection of any 'innovation' (*bid'ah*) as described by the contemporary historians, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, appeared in Andalusia. Those jurists were Mālīkī indeed, but we ought not to go far in seeking the reasons behind the spread and rooting of the Mālīkī *madhab* in Andalusia and the Maghreb. It is sufficient to say here that the 'Abbāsīd state was Ḥanafī or Shāfi'ī and that the Ḥanbalī *madhab* was present as well, excessively at times, whereas the Fāṭimid state had its own Shī'ite school of *fiqh*. Therefore, the Mālīkī *madhab* was the only one that had not been employed politically in the East, neither by the 'Abbāsīds nor by Fāṭimids, and consequently, it was more politically 'qualified', than any other, to be the official *madhab* of the Umayyad state in Andalusia. Being 'politically qualified' implies that politics would employ it to suppress other schools of jurisprudence which were utilized, in one way or another, by the 'Abbāsīd 'other' and the Fāṭimid 'other'. Consequently, if the Mālīkī *fuqahā'* had been 'pedantic' in Andalusia in suppressing other jurisprudential *madhāhib* or in fighting philosophy or the Mu'tazilite or Ash'arite *madhab* or Shī'ite religious creed, they were actually suppressing or fighting religious and intellectual currents that were establishing, in one way or another, the ideology of the dual 'other', the competitor of the state which they served *via* exercising their 'religious' authority through its political power.

On the other hand, the *ḥarakat al-tajdīd* (lit., the movement of ‘renewal’) necessary for the Umayyads in Andalusia in order to establish their own ideological orientation necessarily had to endeavor to transcend all the intellectual elements and orientations, whether jurisprudential or ideological, employed by the dual ‘other’: the ‘Abbāsīd – Fāṭimid. And since the rival epistemological systems in Arab culture by then constituted the three systems of *bayān* (explication/indication) and *burhān* (demonstration/proof) and *‘irfān* (illumination), and since it was not feasible to add a fourth epistemological system, thus, this process of ‘supercession’ must have, of necessity, focused on the relationship between these systems. And since *‘irfān* was the basis of the ideology of ‘Fāṭimid-other’, and since the ideology of the ‘Abbāsīd ‘other’ was based on the combination between the indication of *bayān* and the demonstration of *burhān* at some points and between *bayān* and the illuminationism of *‘irfān* at others, as we have indicated in the previous chapters, thus, the process of ‘supercession’ was obliged to seek a new method to deal with these three epistemological systems. Hence, highlighting this ‘new method’, and elucidating its epistemological dimensions, is what we will focus on in the following paragraphs.

Ibn Ḥazm and the Zāhiri Madhab

‘Know that the religion of Allāh the Most Exalted is apparent [*zāhir*] and nothing is esoteric/hidden [*bāṭin*] in it; it is explicit with no secrets behind it, unquestionably, it is all comprised of proof [*burhān*]. You must hold blame-worthy all of those who call to be followed without *burhān* (proof), and everyone who claims that faith has a concealed and esoteric nature, as these are nothing but mere allegations and superstitions, and you must know that the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, did not conceal a word or more of the *sharī‘ah*, and he did not disclose anything of the *sharī‘ah* to his household, such as his wife or daughter or uncle or cousin or a friend that he had not disclosed to “the red or the black” (i.e., the masses of people [of different racial backgrounds]) or the shepherds among people; and apart from what he called all people to follow, he had no hidden esoteric symbols, and if he had, he would not have been the messenger (who was ordered to bring the message of God to all people). He who says so is an unbeliever (*kāfir*), so beware of saying anything that is not manifest or clearly evidenced.’¹ This was the true politico-ideological content of the ‘Zāhiri *madhab*’ of Ibn Ḥazm

al-Andalusī (AH 384–456), and it is directly addressed against those who assert ‘esotericism’ (*al-bāṭin*) such as Shī‘ites and Sufis.

Ibn Ḥazm explains the factors that led to the emergence of ‘esotericism’ in Islam, saying: ‘The Persians were among the most resourceful and most powerful of nations . . . they even called themselves the free and the sons, and they considered all other people their slaves, so when they were afflicted by the demise of their empire at the hands of the Arabs, who were considered the least dangerous of nations to them, their problem became more complicated and their plight was doubled, and so they became determined to undermine Islam at all times’. Thus, when they had not achieved what they intended with their armed revolutions, ‘they reached a conclusion that fighting Islam with deceptive ploys would be most effective, so some of them embraced Islam openly and sympathised with the Shī‘ites by expressing their love for the household of the Messenger of Allāh and their bitterness over the oppression that was inflicted or ‘Alī. Then, they enticed them towards adopting new beliefs . . . such as the introduction of the idea that there is a man called al-Mahdī who has the whole truth of the religion . . .; saying that the prophethood was originally entitled to someone else (other than Muḥammad) . . .; invalidating some laws of the *sharī‘ah* . . .; and attributing divinity’, then he immediately adds: ‘and some of these malicious sources were introduced by Ismā‘īlis and the Qarmatians’.²

Even though this theory – attributing Ismā‘īli and Qarmatian sources and the belief in ‘esotericism’ to the ‘conspiracy of the Persians’, and so forth – was known and in circulation in Sunni writings from the beginning of the emergence of the Bāṭinīyah during the rule of al-Ma’mūn. Ibn Ḥazm did not cite this theory only in the context of the (Sunni) sectarian stance, namely described as being a mere ‘heritage’, but also he confirms it to belie direct political partisanship. The family of Ibn Ḥazm was one of the prominent families who served the Umayyad dynasty in Andalusia; thus, his father was a vizier to the chamberlain Maṣṣūr bin Abī ‘Āmir during the rule of the caliph Hishām al-Mu’ayyid (who reigned in AH 366) and during whose rule, the Umayyad state witnessed right after his death in AH 393, a dangerous structural crisis due to the struggles over the caliphate inside the Umayyad family itself on the one hand, and successive revolutions against it on the other. In fact, this crisis continued to eat away the state’s very edifice until it eventually collapsed in AH 422. The decisive blow came from the Ḥammadids who had their own principality in northern Maghreb, and they were Ṭalibīyah (Shī‘ites) and consequently allies to the Fāṭimids as we have previously indicated. The Ḥammadids

interfered in the struggle for power in Andalusia and they were able, headed by their leader ‘Alī bin Ḥammūd, to occupy Cordoba in AH 407, so people pledged allegiance to him ‘in the manner of obedience to Hishām al-Mu’ayyid’, whom people thought to be still alive (he had been subject to a rebellion by one of the family members of the Umayyads and was deposed in AH 399 and then murdered in mysterious circumstances).

Therefore, the attitude of Ibn Ḥazm towards the ‘Shī‘ite-Persians’ who had overthrown the Umayyad state in the East and established the state of the ‘Abbāsīd family which he describes as a ‘non-Arab State where Arab *diwans* have fallen under the rule of the Persians of Khurāsān, and the matter has assumed the nature of the *mulk ‘adūd* [mordacious kingship] of Khosrau’.³ This attitude of his can be explained through his attitude towards the ‘Shī‘ite-Ḥammadids’ who overthrew the Umayyad state in Andalusia, the state under the protection of which he and his family had lived and in which they were among the entourage of its palaces; he even struggled with its supporters personally, fought against the Ḥammadids and suffered prosecution – persecution, imprisonment and displacement for that cause. Ibn Ḥazm had been in the vanguard of the ‘Umayyad party’, which overcame time and events and struggled against the Ḥammadids for the purpose of restoring Umayyad rule, and indeed, this party managed to establish some Umayyad caliphs, for some of whom Ibn Ḥazm was appointed a vizier, and among whom the caliph al-Mu‘tamid was the last Umayyad caliph in Andalusia (who was overthrown in AH 422). Therefore, the Zāhirism of Ibn Ḥazm was mainly a *political* attitude, or rather it was tantamount to a combative declaration of the ideological plan which was being devised in Andalusia so as to become the Umayyad dynasty’s theoretical weapon with which to confront its two foes: the Fāṭimids in Egypt and the ‘Abbāsīds in Baghdad. In fact, the first signs of this plan began to appear long before Ibn Ḥazm: it was when ‘Abdul Raḥmān III, the eighth Umayyad emir in Andalusia, managed to eradicate seditions, repel enemies, put an end to the ambition of opponents and start the process of rebuilding the state: ‘So he saved Andalusia from itself and from its foes, and he not only rescued it from destruction but he also succeeded in transforming it into an influential state . . ., so many envoys from France, Germany and Italy appeared at his doors to present their salutes and praises and respect . . . and his fame reached the remotest boundaries of the Islamic kingdom in Asia’,⁴ thus, he merited the title of caliph so he declared himself one and was called ‘Abdul al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir (in AH 316). It was thus that the Umayyad emirate in Andalusia was transformed into a caliphate competing with and penetrating the Fāṭimid caliphate in Egypt

and the 'Abbāsīd caliphate in Baghdad in every field, including the intellectual and ideological arenas in particular.

'Abdul Raḥmān al-Nāṣir endeavoured to emphasise the distinct cultural personality of Andalusia, so he encouraged knowledge, culture and the acquisition of books. However, the two most striking issues in his cultural policy were his special protection of Mundhir bin Sa'īd al-Ballūṭī, whom he appointed as the supreme judge of the *Zāhirī madhab* on the one hand, and his propinquity to the then famous Jewish physician Ḥasdāy Ibn Shabrūṭ on the other hand, whom al-Nāṣir was keen to have accompany him in his private gatherings. And whether these two matters were elements in the cultural strategy consciously planned by al-Nāṣir or whether they were due to mere coincidences, the main distinguishable phenomena of the Andalusian ideological and cultural initiative during, and after, the Umayyad caliphate had two aspects: the first was the emergence of Ibn Ḥazm and his *Zāhirī* school of thought, which was critical and rational in its contours, as we shall address shortly; and the second is Jewish activity, cultural, philosophical and religious, in Andalusia. Thus 'among the outcomes of al-Nāṣir's protection of Ḥasdāy was that Talmudic studies were launched in Spain, and soon this land became the centre for Hebrew studies. Among the results of Ḥasdāy's interest in these disciplines was the improvement of the status of his fellows in religion, which that permitted Jews to have a great share in the Andalusian culture.'⁵

Soon, the scholastic trend would reach its climax in Andalusia, during the reign of the caliph Ḥakam II al-Mustaṣir who succeeded his father al-Nāṣir in AH 350. Al-Mustaṣir was indeed the 'al-Ma'mūn' of the Umayyad state in Andalusia. He gave great attention to collecting books, copying them and sending expeditions to import them: 'he had appointed workers in Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus and Alexandria, assigned to copy all valuable books, whether ancient or new, and his palace was filled with books and those specialised in them, insomuch as it looked like a workshop where only people who do copying, bookbinding and manuscript illumination could be seen',⁶ until he had in his library around 400,000 volumes or 'almost equal to all what the caliphs of the 'Abbāsīd Family had collected for a long period . . . , so people in his reign gravitated towards reading books of ancient scholars and learning their doctrines'.⁷ Thereafter, al-Manṣūr bin Abī 'Āmir, who was a chamberlain to al-Mustaṣir's son, Hishām, after his death, followed the same inclination as 'he was passionate about philosophy and its disciplines' but he was compelled, when he saw *fuqahā'* resisting his dominance, to incite the anger of the public against him in this particular issue, to sacrifice philosophy in order to preserve

‘politics’, so he ordered the removal of the books of ancient scholars – except for those of medicine and mathematics – from the library of al-Mustaṣir and burnt them, and thus appeased the *fuqahā*’ again. Yet all this could not get in the way of the scientific movement which remained active and flourishing,⁸ including the ‘knowledge of the ancients’ that continued to be taught and disseminated clandestinely.⁹

One of the results of that broad scholaristic scientific movement launched by al-Nāṣir, and widely patronised by al-Mustaṣir, was that a large number of scholars in medicine, engineering, mathematics and astronomy, in addition to those scholars in *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* (prophetic traditions) and language, filled Andalusia by the end of the Umayyad dynasty.¹⁰ The most famous among them was Ibn Ḥazm, who epitomises through his *Zāhiri madhab* of *fiqh* the ideological plan of the Umayyad state in Andalusia, and whose epistemological bases would become the foundations of Andalusian culture in its various branches: that which would confer upon Arab thought in Andalusia its distinct particularity.

The origins of the *Zāhiri madhab* are traced back to Dāwūd al-Aṣbahānī (AH 202–270) who was initially a Shāfi‘ī before subsequently tending towards *ḥadīth* and abandoning analogy (*qiyās*) which was extensively implemented by the Shāfi‘īs in their verdicts. Al-Aṣbahānī’s doctrine can be summed up, as advocated by him, his son and their followers, in two issues: the first is the allegation that the *sharī‘ah* is a mere text (*naṣṣ*) and that the ordinances must be taken as they are stated literally/apparently [i.e., in their *zāhir* form], without further interpretations or resort to analogy. Thus, they consider that the Qur’ān is self-apparent and so the apparent utterances directly imply the intended meaning; therefore there is no place for figurative implications or analogies in it. As for the second issue, it relates to matters that do not appear in any particular and direct text, and here, the *Zāhirīs* delve into what they call *al-dalīl* (lit., proof or evidence), which is deduction or inference that relies on the explicit text as well. Thus, instead of asserting that *al-nabīdh* (date wine) is forbidden (*ḥarām*) by analogy with *al-khamr* (grape wine), which is mentioned explicitly and literally by name in the text, and based on the ‘supposition’ (*ẓann*) of the jurists that the reason (*al-‘illah*) for the prohibition of *al-nabīdh* is its intoxicating properties, the thing that applies to *al-khamr*, so instead of analogising the forbidden nature of *al-nabīdh* in this way, the *Zāhirīs* posit two premises derived directly from the text, and they say: ‘Every inebriating drink is *khamr* (grape wine) and every *khamr* is forbidden’ (in the form of a prophetic *ḥadīth*), then the result is that: ‘every inebriating drink is forbidden’, even though this statement is not explicitly stated in

the text; however, it is mandatory due to the apparent meaning of the text. So the thing relates then, not by analogising the branch (ruling) on the basis of the root source (principle), but by what is known for scholars as *dalālat al-lafẓ* (the connotation of the utterance) and for logicians as 'enthymeme'.¹¹

This is the kernel of the *Zāhirī madhab* of jurisprudence as known by the time of Ibn Ḥazm. It is an 'offshoot' or better a 'deviation' from the *Shāfi'ī madhab* without necessarily overstepping it (in the dialectical sense of the word). As for the 'Zāhirī' tendency of Ibn Ḥazm, even if it followed the same direction of Dāwūd and his son, it was deeper and broader. It intended to outstrip the *Shāfi'ī madhab* by re-establishing the explicatory system of *bayān in toto*, in terms of the *sharī'ah*, religious creed and linguistics. Hence, the invalidation of analogy by Ibn Ḥazm, which was codified by al-Shāfi'ī and rendered official by his followers, is not a mere jurisprudential position, but it is a general epistemological position tending to set new foundations for the system of *bayān*, other than those already established by al-Shāfi'ī. In this case, what are these fundamentals?

Al-Shāfi'ī codified the system of *bayān* at the level of the Qur'anic discourse so he founded the science of *ilm uṣūl al-fiqh* (lit., the knowledge of the fundamental root sources of jurisprudence), soon the rules of this knowledge had become the *logic* of the Arab *bayān* reason and the bases for cognitive production within Arab-Islamic knowledge as we have indicated in Chapter Five. Ibn Ḥazm was *Shāfi'ī* in orientation during the first stage of his intellectual life, then he departed from the *Shāfi'ī madhab*, yet he did not do so for the purpose of adopting the *Zāhirī* school of jurisprudence as it was during his days, but for the purpose of establishing a *new madhab* for himself, based actually on the *zāhir* (manifest), but not the *zāhir* in the sense of confining to the apparent meaning of the text to extract legal ordinances as was the case with the *Zāhirism* of Dāwūd al-Aṣḥabānī and his followers, but rather the *zāhir* in the sense of rejecting any *bāṭinī* (esoteric) content entirely, namely rejecting *Shī'ite* illumination and the *Sufi gnosis* together on the one hand, and rejecting analogy, whether analogising the branch from the root source or the implicit (*al-bāṭin*) with the explicit (*al-zāhir*) as practised by *Ḥanafī*, *Mālikī* and *Ḥanbalī 'ulamā'* as well, and consecrated by *Mu'tazilite* and *Ash'arite* theologians on the other hand. Therefore, the issue here is related, as we have previously said, not to a mere schism with the *Shāfi'ī madhab* and consequently persisting within its jurisprudential problematic, but the issue is related basically to an ambition to re-establish the explicatory order of *bayān* as a whole.

It is clear that the re-establishment of the system of *bayān* in the days of Ibn Ḥazm was not as feasible as it had been during the days of al-Shāfi‘ī. In fact, the struggle in the days of al-Shāfi‘ī was limited to that between the *ahl al-ra‘y* (the exponents of opinion) and *ahl al-ḥadīth* (those who rely strictly, if not exclusively, on rote recitation of reports of prophetic tradition), and al-Shāfi‘ī aimed at containing this conflict in a way to put an end to the over-inflation of the *ḥadīth* and the inflation of the opinion together. His method was by adopting a ‘new’ fundamental that combined opinion and *ḥadīth*, and this fundamental was: ‘You may only analogise with a previous example/precedent’ (including the Qur’ān, the *sunnaḥ* or consensus – *ijmā‘*). As for the days of Ibn Ḥazm, the situation was more complicated; there were, in the first place, intrinsic problems that the system of *bayān* had suffered due to the dominance of the instrument of analogy which led to a ‘departure from the fundamentals and divergent ramifications in conflicts and differences’. Ibn Ḥazm says: ‘And all the partisans of analogy (*al-qiyās*) have different perspectives of analogy, as soon as a single issue is raised, so that every group formulates a different analogy claiming that it is the correct one and which contradicts the other analogy, and they unanimously admit that not every analogy is correct nor is every opinion.’¹² And in the second instance, ‘*irfān*’ and the ‘*burhān*’ which had not yet strengthened their foundations in the days of al-Shāfi‘ī as they had in the days of Ibn Ḥazm, where each of them became possessed of a complete epistemological system, occupying essential positions within Arab culture and associated with the *bayān* as a cognitive system by conflicting and interference relations as we described in the previous chapter.

How would Ibn Ḥazm resolve the situation? Obviously, we will not be able to trace in detail the opinions of Ibn Ḥazm, therefore we will present an overall view of his position in regard to the following issues:

Ibn Ḥazm defined the system of *bayān* as follows: ‘Since what is evil is so in itself, it is possible to be discerned by those who seek to know it.’¹³ And with regard to the *sharī‘ah* and the religious creed, Ibn Ḥazm decides that they are the subject matter of the explication of the Qur’ān, and consequently, their issues can be discerned directly from the Qur’ān *without* esoteric interpretation or the resort to rational ‘interpretation’. Thus, Islam is a religious creed and a law presented in ‘Arabic words with predetermined denotations in terms of the language with which the Qur’ān has been revealed, so it is not admissible for anyone to divert a word from its meaning which is predetermined in the language employed by Allāh in the Qur’ān, to another meaning, unless based on a text in the Qur’ān or words of the Messenger of Allāh or a consensus emanating from the

scholars of *ummah* that would imply that it denotes another meaning, or if the meaning of that word needs to be changed due to the necessity of common sense or sound reason, only then can it be considered for such.¹⁴ Hence were the four fundamentals: the Qurʾān, the *sunnah*, consensus (of the scholars) – *ijmāʿ* – and reasoning. And just as the *sunnah* does not contradict the Qurʾān, but rather completes and explains it, and since consensus completes the *sunnah* and explains it as well, then it could never contradict the Qurʾān, and neither reasoning. Reason does not contradict the Qurʾān, and the Qurʾān does not contradict reason. And Ibn Ḥazm asserts this meaning saying: ‘everything that Allāh the Most Exalted said is true and consists of nothing contradictory to the reasonable (*laysa minhu shayʾun munāfiyan li-l-maʿqūl*), but it is entirely, even before He almighty informs us about it, within the boundaries of possibility for us; then when He the almighty tells us about it, it becomes certainly right and true.’¹⁵ Moreover, he says: ‘everything supported by an inferential evidence [*burhān*], whatever it might be, is clearly stated and written in the Qurʾān and the words of the Prophet; it can be discerned by those who scrutinise and Allāh the Most Exalted will endow them with comprehension. Whereas everything else, that cannot be proven, constitutes persuasion or contention, for the Qurʾān and the words of the Messenger are free from such.’¹⁶ And if we want to put it in Hegelian terms: ‘everything that is Qurʾānic is reasonable, and everything that is reasonable is Qurʾānic’.

How does Ibn Ḥazm posit this principle? Concerning the arena of *fiqh*, Ibn Ḥazm asserts that the Qurʾān is a ‘perspicuous book (*kitāb mubīn*) and ‘the pellucid which is clear . . . for those who know the language with which we were addressed’.¹⁷ The explication (*bayān*) of the Qurʾān consists of three parts: one part is perspicuous by itself and does not require further elucidation, and a part that requires elucidation, and its elucidation is in the Qurʾān itself, and a part that requires elucidation and its elucidation is in the *sunnah*.¹⁸ Thus, the Qurʾān is the primal source, or even it is the source of all sources, in fact, all other sources are considered as such because the explication contained in the Qurʾān had determined them to be so. For instance, when He almighty says: ‘O you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger [Muḥammad], and those of you who have been given the matter [*al-amr*] [typically, *charge*]’ in the view of Ibn Ḥazm this is to show people that the sources of legislation are the holy scripture (the obedience of Allāh) and the *sunnah* (the obedience of the Messenger) and consensus (the obedience of those in authority, and these are the scholars of the *ummah*, according to him). As for the fourth source, namely, ‘reason’ which is called in jurisprudence *al-dalīl* (lit., the evidence

or indication), it derives from the first three sources and is generated from them, yet not in the form of an analogy, but in other forms which do not depend on the jurisprudential ‘causal basis [for a ruling]’ (*‘illah*) but are based on logical considerations.

Ibn Ḥazm limits the forms of the *dalīl* to seven parts: such as when the text consists of two premises and does not mention the solution, then, deriving that solution would be *al-dalīl*; another form is the generalisation of the protasis in a conditional clause; another is when the denotation designated by the utterance (*al-lafẓ*) embraces another meaning which is not consistent with it; and another form is when the legal status/ruling for a thing is not provided by the text, neither as being permissible nor for forbidden, in this case it is considered admissible, such as what he calls ‘the inversion of the cases’ and this is the inversion of the conveyed issue and the issue of the conveyed, and another form is when the utterance (*al-lafẓ*) is designated for a certain denotation and this denotation has a necessitation so these necessitations are comprehended from the utterance (*al-lafẓ*); and the last form is that which Ibn Ḥazm calls ‘the progressive cases’, namely the logical encroachment.¹⁹

It is obvious that Ibn Ḥazm intends to found *bayān*, not on analogy, analogising one partial onto another as al-Shāfi‘ī did, but on a logical basis depending on well-known rational rules – the rules of *universal reason* – such as the transition from two premises to a necessarily postulated result, or the transition from a postulate (*lāzim*) onto a postulated (*malzūm*), or from the total onto a partial and so forth among these logical rules that Ibn Ḥazm sought to apply, or even *integrate* into the milieu of his discourse. The essential thing that Ibn Ḥazm entirely excludes is *al-ta‘īl* (lit., justification on the presumption of a causal basis – *‘illah*), upon which is based the analogy of *fiqh*. Of course, if we exclude *al-ta‘īl* then analogy would be without a subject.

Just as Ibn Ḥazm rejects *al-ta‘īl* (ruling according to assumed causal bases) in *fiqh*, he also rejects the syntactical *‘illal* (lit., causes) and perhaps even more intensely, and consequently, he totally rejects analogy in grammar/syntax as he says: the syntactical causatives are ‘all corrupt and none of them is in any way close to the truth, and the only rightful thing in this is what is heard from the people of the language to whom is had recourse in its rectification and its transmission, other than this, even though this recourse is corrupt and contradictory, it is also a lie, because what they said was the origin as such and when it was considered to be weighty it was transmitted into something else . . . a thing that anyone who has sense knows it is a lie, it never existed and neither did the Arabs operate according to it to an extent, and then it was transmitted to what

was heard of it later'.²⁰ Therefore we see Ibn Ḥazm advising to consider grammar sufficient in order to comprehend the rules of the Arabic language, 'as for the in-depth learning of grammar, it is a mere useless inquisitiveness, it is even a diversion from what is useful, and a detachment from the most important and necessary of rules, it is all lies. So why become occupied with something that is described as such? Whereas the intention of this knowledge is: [specifying] discourse/objects of address and what necessary to enable humans to read the collected books of knowledge and science . . .'²¹

We are here very far from the attitude of Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī in his debate with Mattā. In fact, Ibn Ḥazm does not consider that syntax constitutes logic for Arabic language but he perceives it as rules that could be considered as auditory, and its task is to specify and control 'discourse/ objects of address' and to control 'reading', not more. As for the 'control' (*dabt*) of thinking, this is the task of logic. Therefore, it was necessary for religious and rational knowledge alike. Ibn Ḥazm says that he who does not know logic 'is unable to pronounce a verdict between two parties for he is ignorant in the rules and structure of language, establishing premises, and the production of conclusions upon which inferential evidence is established and are forever true, or to discern between the valid and the invalid among premises'.²² Yet logic within Arab culture 'is a maltreated knowledge and it is a duty and reward to empower those who are maltreated' according to Ibn Ḥazm. And if logic is 'maltreated' by its attackers including *fuqahāʾ* and *mutakallimūn*, it is even more 'maltreated' by authors who write in Arab culture, and those who had not integrated it within the milieu of Arab culture; but who adopted simply a literal translation of it; thus, their expressions, terminologies and examples became strange and repulsive. This kind of 'maltreatment' is the one he intends to 'lift' in his book entitled *al-Taqrīb li-Ḥadd al-Manṭiq wa al-Madkhal ilayhi* (*Converging on the Boundary of Logic and the Introduction to It*). He says: 'When we look into this, we found some defects which lead to tribulations for which we previously mentioned the complexity of translating them, and their mention in non-colloquial utterances that are not in common usage, and not every concept is appropriate to every expression, to bring us closer to Allāh the Most Magnificent by transmitting these meanings by way of these simplistic and easy utterances in a way that is equally comprehensible for the common persons and the elite, and the learned or the ignorant, each according to his own perception.'²³

We are here then before an initiative for the 'Arabicisation' of logic, and its integration into the Arabic language in a manner respecting the norms and bases of its expression.²⁴ So, had Ibn Ḥazm succeeded in defeating the bane of 'translation'?

When he was describing Ibn Ḥazm, Ṣāʿid had noted in his aforementioned book that he had ‘contradicted Aristotle the founder of this science [logic] in some of its fundamentals, a contradiction for which he had not comprehended the underlying intention; and he was sceptical in his book, therefore, his book [i.e., that of Ibn Ḥazm] in this sense consists of many errors and apt to be a failure.’²⁵ We believe that Ṣāʿid was perhaps somewhat harsh in his description of Ibn Ḥazm, especially given that this latter had expressed more than once the linguistic difficulties that opposed his desire to ‘Arabise’ logic due to the fact that the Arabic language does not allow transmission of the content of the logical terminology as it is expressed in Latin language to which he reverted in order to examine meanings of the logical ‘particles’ (*al-ḥurūf*) and terminologies. For instance, he says, concerning the interrogative particles: ‘You must know that the Arabic language is not capable of expression beyond what you see, as the interrogation beginning with *mā* [lit., what] and the one beginning with *ayy* [lit., which] could be equal in the Arabic language, where each could serve as a substitute for the other and fall under the same implication, and he who excels in Latin would know the difference between the two significations intended by the interrogative.’²⁶

Should we agree with Abi Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī and say, with him, to Ibn Ḥazm that what you suffer from results from your intention to ‘interpose a language within a language that has been predetermined among its people’? We will leave behind this discussion for the second volume of this book where we intend to analyse the concepts and utterances of *bayān* and *ʿirfān* and *burhān* altogether. As for now, we would try to emphasise the position of Ibn Ḥazm *vis-à-vis* the content of the inferential evidence of *burhān*, namely, rational knowledge and its epistemological foundation: the principles of the ‘universal reason’.

We would begin with the issue of causality. Ibn Ḥazm says: ‘The Ashʿarites went as far as denying all properties/natures [*al-ṭabāʿi*], and they have asserted that there is no warmth in the fire or cold in the ice, and there is no nature in the world in the first place: and they have asserted that the sense of warmth of the fire and cold of the ice result from interaction, they said that alcohol has no inebriating nature . . . Abū Muḥammad [Ibn Ḥazm] said we do not know what proof drove them to act according to this obsession in the first place . . . and this doctrine is corrupt and drove them to consider whatever came from the prophets including miracles as paranormal things because they considered the improbability of cleaving the moon in two [as attributed to Muḥammad in a tradition] or the sea [as in the case of Moses] and the improbability of resurrecting the

dead [as in the case of Jesus] . . . to be normative habitude. And Abū Muḥammad said God forbid all that, and if this these miracles were norms there would not be any miracle in it *ab initio*'. Then he adds by saying: 'And all those properties and habitudes are created by Allāh the Most Exalted, and He organised nature in a manner so that there would be nothing impossible in it and it would not be changed according to every subject who has reason . . . because part of the characteristics borne by any described entity (*al-mawṣūf*) are essentials of its identity and cannot go away unless that in which they inhere is corrupt and its appellation is dropped, such as the case when the characteristics of wine become void for it turns into vinegar and it ceases to be called wine . . . and thus, everything has an essential characteristic, and this is nature.'²⁷

As for the principles of identity and non-contradiction, Ibn Ḥazm considers them to be the 'structure of reason' (*bunyat al-'aql*) itself according to his terminology, and this is evident when he speaks of the 'impossible' and classifies it into four sections: impossible by attribution (*muḥal bi-l-iḍāfab*), such as the growth of a beard in a little child; and impossible by existence (*muḥal bi-l-wujūd*) such as the transformation of an inanimate object into an animal or vice versa 'and this is impossible for us and does not exist, but it can be imagined by reason the mind'. As for the third type of the impossible, it is: 'the impossible for us given the structure of reason such as considering a person to be standing and seated together at the same time, or such as someone asking if Allāh almighty can render a person seated and not seated simultaneously, and all that which might be conceived in reason which could be influenced or possibly occur or exist without the Lord Almighty.' As for the fourth impossible, it is the 'absolutely impossible' (*al-muḥal al-muṭlaq*)²⁸ such as saying that characteristic of the essence of Allāh could be changed, since the essence of Allāh is by definition impervious to change.

As for the natural sciences, Ibn Ḥazm purifies them of all Hermetic impurities and considers them to be rational sciences in the genuine sense of the word. He says while responding to a group of people who called themselves theologians and who 'considered some books imperfect, books they do not know anything about neither they have read them nor have they seen a word of them, such as the books on astronomy and the orbits and course of stars, as well as books collected by Aristotle on the limits of discourse theology', he says: 'All these books are sound and beneficial, and they indicate the unicity [*tawḥīd*] of Allāh the Most Exalted and His power, they are of great use in critical assessment of all knowledge/sciences.'²⁹ Ibn Ḥazm responds to the Hermetic and Neo-Platonic

supposition that was insistently defended by Ibn Sīnā and which asserts that: ‘When it is the case that we reason [with reason] and when the planets govern us [i.e., our affairs or existence], then they are more preeminent than we in reason.’ He responds to this supposition saying: ‘And what they have mentioned is nothing because the planets even if they had an apparent influence in the world, this influence does not emanate out of a choice . . . thus, the planets are impelled and not free, and their influence is similar to the influence of fire when it burns or water when it cools or poison when it corrupts the constitution.’³⁰ He also says: ‘Some people have alleged that the stars and planets are able to reason and that they can see and hear, but that they do not taste nor smell, and this is a claim without proof [*bi-lā burhān*], and whatever is as such is invalid and rejected from every sect by the primacy of reason as it is not more true than another claim that opposes and contradicts it. And the proof of the correctness of the verdict that the planets and the stars do not reason in the first place, is that their movement is forever the same, it does not change, and this is the characteristic of inanimate objects subject to influence [i.e., not influencing] which have no choice [*ikhṭiyār*].’³¹ And with the same logic, Ibn Ḥazm responds to astrologers who claim to know what will happen by referring to the planets and who claim that they are able to know that through experiences/experiments, saying: ‘the experiments cannot be reliable unless they were regular, repetitive occurrences which would compel the souls to acknowledge them just as we are compelled to acknowledge that if a person stays under water for over three hours he will die, or if he puts his hand in a fire it will burn, and this could not be decided by the destiny of the stars because the attribution of their influence concerns beings which do not return except after tens of thousands of years, therefore their experience cannot be correct.’³²

And with the same logic, the logic of the ‘universal reason’, Ibn Ḥazm rejects strongly and firmly the theory of the Ash‘arites, in particular that of al-Bāqillānī, that holds it was possible for ‘miraculous occurrences’ to emanate of holy men (*awlīyā’*) and that it was possible to ‘change the character and properties of things’ through magic, so he decrees firmly that: ‘The bringing into existence of such a thing by a magician or a righteous person (*ṣāliḥ*) in any way is impossible . . . and it is inadmissible by reason . . . and if it were possible, then the inadmissible and the possible and the necessary would be equivalent, thus all facts would be invalid and every inadmissible thing would be possible.’ And Ibn Ḥazm does only acknowledge such things for the prophets as ‘no person could invert an inherent property or transform a property but Allāh Almighty and only

for His prophets.’ And since the Prophet of Islam is the last of the prophets and messengers, miracles have ceased completely after his death, because if such were possible after the death of the Prophet, they would have been equivocal in religion and a confusion inflicted by Allāh Almighty upon all his people, first and last, yet this is incompatible with the promise of Allāh Almighty and His statement that He has shown us the right way and the wrong way.’ As for the influences attributed to magic and talismans, Ibn Ḥazm describes them saying that ‘they are not transformations of natures or inversion of inherent properties, but these are powers that Allāh Almighty established to repel other powers, such as when warmth repels coldness and when coldness repels warmth’.³³

Furthermore, just as Ibn Ḥazm rejects the irrationalism of the Ash‘arites³⁴ and others, he similarly rejects Sufi gnosis and Shī‘ite illumination. Thus, he responds to those who believe in inspiration or ‘disclosure’ (*al-kashf*) and those who believe in ‘the Imam’. Concerning those who believe in *al-kashf*, he objects saying: ‘What difference is there between you and the person who believes he was inspired with the invalidation of your belief?’ This implies that the inspiration cannot be proven, and cannot be the source of a knowledge that could be accepted by all people and therefore, it cannot serve as a norm or a decisive criterion, or a referential authority over everybody. Yet, reason alone, and the universal reason in particular, is the precept, and it is the criterion and the only referential authority acceptable. As for those who believe in the Imam, he poses the following objection, saying: ‘How would you tell the truth of the Imam’s utterance? Is it by inspiration, and we have just proved it is invalid, or by proof, and there is no proof for the Imam, and even believing in the Imam is contrary to the proof, or is it simply words with no evidence for them, and in this case, what would you tell the person who negates your words without evidence?’

With the same logic also, Ibn Ḥazm rejects ‘imitation’ (*al-taqlīd*) what is often considered to be *uncritical* imitation of a person or authority. He objects those who invoke necessity to imitate the imam or a certain *madhab*, saying: ‘what difference is there between your *taqlīd* and the person who follows another *taqlīd* different from yours?’³⁵ However, Ibn Ḥazm goes even beyond the boundaries of ‘the conventional’ in this field, and he forbids the imitation of the imams who belong to the *madhāhib* of *fiqh* and theology, he says: ‘It is not permissible for anyone to imitate anyone, dead or alive, and each has his own *fiqh* corresponding to his own capacity’, and even the common person ought not imitate the *mufti*, and it is not admissible to say that the *sharī‘ah* allows it, but ‘he who claims that the

common person ought to imitate the *mufti* has claimed an invalid matter, and said something extrinsic to the text of the Qurʾān or the *sunnah* or consensus or analogy, and in such a case it is invalid because it is a statement without evidence'.³⁶ And he also says: 'and he who imitates a Companion or a follower [of the second generation], i.e., one of the Companions of the Prophet or a member of the succeeding generation or Mālik or Abū Ḥanīfah or al-Shāfiʿī or Sufyān or al-Awzāʿī or Aḥmad (i.e., Ibn Ḥanbal) or Abū Dāwūd, they will disown him in this world and the Hereafter.'³⁷

And if inspiration (*al-ilhām*) and belief in the imam were invalidated as well as imitation, the only thing left would be reason and the sense as sources for knowledge. Ibn Ḥazm says: 'There is basically no path towards knowledge except in one of two ways: one of them is what is necessitated by intuitive axiomatic reason and the senses, and the second is the premise reverting back to the axioms reason and prerequisites of sense',³⁸ and from these premises and from them alone can correct knowledge be founded, and through the correctness of this knowledge, there must be compliance with the rules of logic and the conditions of true proof'. On this basis, Ibn Ḥazm establishes his doctrine concerning the religious creed (*ʿaqīdah*) and the *sharīʿah* together: he begins with reason first, he proves with the 'rational evidence' (*al-dalīl al-ʿaqlī*) the existence of Allāh and His oneness and the prophecy of Muḥammad and the validity of His invocation, so that if this is achieved, he will have proven the veracity of the Qurʾān and the *sunnah*; thus, he adopts them alone and considers the apparent meaning of the text, rendering the Arabic language alone the referential authority in comprehending their content, and he considers diverting the meaning of the word from the linguistically known and apparent to another meaning inadmissible, unless the text or consensus or the intuitive sense or reason permits it as we have indicated previously.

In brief, these were the most prominent features of the plan of Ibn Ḥazm the 'Zāhiri', his philosophical and ideological initiative. The 'Zāhiri' aspect of Ibn Ḥazm, perceived in light of the political circumstances that framed his thought and drew the boundaries of his inclination, is an opposing ideological plan to the ideology of the Fātimid state and the ideology of the 'Abbāsīd state which were competing, in a historical conflict, for Andalusia, and which were engaged in combat in particular with the weapon of ideology. Ibn Ḥazm was speaking on behalf of the Umayyad caliphate (in Andalusia) and carrying its ideological and cultural plan for the future. But if we perceive the Zāhiri aspect of Ibn Ḥazm from purely the epistemological angle, we will find an intellectual plan with philo-

sophical dimensions seeking to re-establish theology and to rearrange the relations between it and between the inferential evidence of *burhān* with a total exclusion of *ʿirfān*. Undoubtedly, that which gives this intellectual plan its historical importance and future dimensions, is its critical character on the one hand, and its lack of any preoccupation with ‘reconciliation’ or ‘combination’ between transmitted tradition (*al-naql*) and reason, or between religion and philosophy. The insistence of Ibn Ḥazm on reading the Qurʾān from within its original discursive scope bound by the Arabic language and its modes of expression and conceptual content as it was in the days of the Prophet is in fact the primary content of the Zāhiri *madhab*, and his insistence on this proves that he obviously realised the particular character of religious discourse, and consequently the mistake of submitting it to the premises and mechanisms of another discourse. As for his insistence, on the other hand, on the necessity of respecting the norms of reason and committing to such, and the necessity of spreading logic, Arabicising it and integrating it according to its milieu within the Arab culture, all this is clearly in evidence as well, not only in his belief in the ‘universalism of reason’, but also in his ambition to render it the sole referential authority in the various epistemological fields. Thus, the Zāhiri aspect of Ibn Ḥazm is, in its critical content, a proclamation of the necessity to surpass theology and its sophisticated problematic, and to attain to a higher level in terms of intellect and thinking and problematic to philosophy, yet, not as the rhetorical discourse of the universal reason, but as having the same goal as the *sharīʿah*: virtue and good policies. He says: ‘What true philosophy means, tends and intends, through its teachings, is nothing other than the reform of the soul through employing virtues in the world and good conduct leading to its welfare in the Afterlife, and the good policies at home and within the community. And it is the very same intention of the *sharīʿah*.’ Then he wonders: ‘is it not that philosophy, according to all philosophers, connotes the distinction between virtues and vices, relying on evidences to distinguish between right and wrong?’²³⁹ And despite the fact that this *fatwā* (legal ruling) came in the course of responding to ‘those who denied the ordinances of the *sharīʿah* among those belonging to philosophy’, it nevertheless recorded a positive and courageous attitude from philosophy, especially given that it came in a period when the political jurisprudential siege had not been lifted as yet. It is the plan of reason (*al-mashrūʿ al-rushdī*) then, and the Zāhiri aspect with which Ibn Ḥazm was replete, imbued thoroughly with its rational and critical content. We would move now to this plan, and we would begin with identifying its ‘agent’ – al-Mahdī bin Tūmart, as he will

lead us along the road to the ideological background indispensable to comprehending its epistemological and philosophical content as well as its historical moment and its position in the context of the formation of Arab reason.

Ibn Tūmart and the Excluded Middle

It was not possible for the Zāhiri inclination of Ibn Ḥazm to achieve its aspirations in intellectual and cultural hegemony at a period when the Umayyad dynasty in Andalusia, on behalf of which he used to speak and bear its ideological plan, was, in fact, in its final days, that is, if it were not already moribund. The Zāhiri inclination of Ibn Ḥazm consisted of a plan with a total and absolute ideology, intended to be spread over society at large, so there had to be – of a necessity – an authority that could impose it. Ibn Ḥazm understood this: ‘As for our case from our vantage point, the judgment of it is the same as this following example: the most ascetic people in the world are its own people, and I have read in the Bible that Jesus, peace be upon him, said: a prophet only loses deference in his own country, and we have seen this true with the things that happened to the Prophet within [his tribe of] Quraysh . . .’⁴⁰ and he used to say also: ‘there are two *madhab* that had spread through the power of authority, the school of thought of Mālik in the Maghreb and the school of thought of Abū Ḥanīfah in the East’⁴¹ and there is no doubt that he meant that his *madhab* required an authority to champion and impose it, so as not to die and vanish.

However, revolutionary ideologies do not die, but they are recovered in one way or another in a timely fashion. And the Zāhiri inclination of Ibn Ḥazm was, as we have seen, of that kind. Therefore, it was not a strange thing to find it becoming, after slightly over fifty years, the basis of a revolutionary political movement led by al-Mahdī bin Tūmart (d. AH 524) in Maghreb from AH 511 onwards against the Almoravid dynasty which enlisted many of the most prominent scholars, jurists and figures resorted to put an end to the civil war between the rulers of different sects in it and to repel the aspirations of the Christian kings in regard to it. Yūsuf bin Tāshfīn, the emir of Almoravids, had moved to Andalusia three times for *jihād* and ended up finally in bringing the region under his direct authority from AH 484. The administrative and political apparatus of the Almoravids, who came from the desert, was under the authority of the *fuqahā*‘ who were ardent Mālikis and strict ‘imitators of tradition’ so they

strangled the freedom of thought that had been blossoming in Andalusia when the central authority dissolved and Andalusia was governed by the kings of different sects who were competing to boast among each other, thus, they encouraged science and scientists. As for the Maghreb, the conduct of the *fuqahā'* was an extension of the same phenomenon that had been prevalent before, the phenomenon of the hegemony of imitation (*al-taqlīd*) in *fiqh* and religious creed. This was the 'stagnation' (*jumūd*) and the 'deviation' (*al-inḥirāf*) upon which Ibn Tūmart would concentrate his reformist, or even *revolutionary*, movement.

Al-Mahdī bin Tūmart had adopted the (Qur'ānic) slogan 'commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong' as his religious weapon, and considered the slogan 'the abandonment of imitation (*al-taqlīd*) and the return to the 'fundamentals', (*al-uṣūl*) as his ideological weapon, so he began striking at the Almoravid state in its ideological and religious nature. The Almoravids were considered by Ibn Tūmart to have deviated from the correct religion because their *fuqahā'* had adopted analogy, analogising the unseen (*in absentia*) on the basis of what is witnessed (*in praesentia*) so they had inflicted people, themselves and their state with the attribution of bodily attributes (to Allāh) and anthropomorphism in terms of the religious creed as they had analogised Allāh through the human being, and they had consecrated '*al-taqlīd*' at the level of the *sharī'ah* through their substituting branch derivations (*furū'*) in the place of the fundamentals (*uṣūl*), and consequently they had departed from the Book and the *sunnah*. With this premise, which directly derives from the religious content and the epistemological basis of the Zāhiri aspect of Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Tūmart went all the way with his movement to the establishment of the Almohad dynasty which would substantiate the ideological plan with its cultural strategy, the plan for which Ibn Ḥazm fought. We will focus now on how the Almohad dynasty retraced the plan of Ibn Ḥazm, and we will begin with the presentation of the recommendations of the founder of the movement related to the establishment of the state: the methodological recommendations of Ibn Tūmart.

Perhaps the most important intellectual written work retaining the methodology of Ibn Tūmart is the book *Kitāb A'az Mā Yuṭlab* (*The Book of the Most Precious of Requirements*)⁴² in which his successor, 'Abd al-Ma'mūn bin 'Alī, the real founder of the Almohad dynasty, collected the traditions and comments forming what he considered the theoretical bases and the general ideological framework of the reformist call of Ibn Tūmart. In fact, this book is closer to a new proposal of the methodology of thought and research concerning the religious creed and the *sharī'ah*. Thus, the epistemological principle orienting the rhetorical discourse of Ibn Tūmart

in this book is the principle of *al-thālith al-marfūʿ* (i.e., the law of the excluded middle) and according to his preferred terminology the principle of ‘no intermediary between negation and affirmation’. In fact, in this book we are confronted with a firm rejection of this ‘third value’, sought insistently by the dialectical, philosophical and jurisprudential Arab thought, through the adoption of analogising what is unseen through what is evident in terms of epistemological production.⁴³

Ibn Tūmart criticises the analogy of what is unseen unknown (*in absentia*) through what is evident known (*in praesentia*) in various areas where it is employed in Arab culture, the areas of jurisprudence as well as theology and language, considering this critique of his an epistemological basis whereby to criticise the ideology that was intended to directly constitute the ideological cover of the Almoravid dynasty. Thus, in the arena of *fiqh*, Ibn Tūmart considers that legal ordinance is not proven through analogy because it is a manner of thinking which does not derive the benefit of certainty but which incites intuition and doubt not more. For him, the thing that proves the legal ruling (*al-ḥukm*) is the fundamental source (*al-aṣl*), and *only* the fundamental. His call to return to the root fundamentals [of the religion] was from this standpoint. He says: ‘A legal ruling cannot be affirmed by supposition [*zann*]; it can only be proven through knowledge [*al-ʿilm*]. And seeking the meanings through supposition without verifying them or considering fundamentals upon which they are based ceases to be the methodology of truth.’⁴⁴ Further, if the jurists seek their intuitive cognisance by means of analogy of what is unseen through what is evident in which they depend on the so-called ‘causal basis’ (*al-ʿillah*), Ibn Tūmart considers this ‘causal basis’ not to be the true cause but a mere ‘token’ (*amārah*) and a sign, and the legal ruling could be verified in it but not through it. He says: ‘the legal ruling is verified through the fundamental; and the legal ruling is verified in the token, but the difference between “to be verified through” and “to be verified in” is like the difference between heaven and earth.’⁴⁵ Needless to say that the critique of the causal basis in *fiqh* in this way entirely undermines analogy on the basis of what is unseen by what is evident.

However, in the field of theology, Ibn Tūmart sees that depending on the analogy on the basis of what is unseen through what is evident will lead evidentially to anthropomorphism. As: ‘the absolute existing [Allāh] is the Ancient Eternal Who is mightier than constraints and properties, and Who manages absolute existence, without particularities or restrictions’.⁴⁶ Therefore, he ought not be analogised with the world of evidence, the natural world and the human being which is filled with restrictions and particularities, he says: ‘Invalid is the analogy of what is unseen with

what is evident as there is no common point between them, for each of them is the opposite of the other, and for this one [Allāh] acts and that one [the world] does not act, and this one is eternal and that one is incidental/temporal, and this one is boundless and self-sufficient and that one is impoverished and dependent. So, if one of them is analogised in terms of the other, both their realities will be invalidated, for analogy is true between equals/peers, and between two variants if there is a common thing between them, and Allāh the Most Exalted has no peer or equal. So if this is invalid, then the comparison is invalid as well as the analogy of what is unseen with what is evident.²⁴⁷ Obviously, Ibn Tūmart interrelates this comparison and anthropomorphism of which he had accused Almoravids, with the analogy of what is unseen with what is evident, and hence the epistemological critique was an ideological one as well.

In the field of language and syntax, Ibn Tūmart rejects analogy on the grounds that language cannot be proven by employing it, but it can only be proven, like the *sharīʿah* and the religious creed, through fundamentals alone. And the fundamental root source in the field of language and syntax is hearing (*al-samāʿ*), because language, as Ibn Tūmart says, is based on *conventions* (*al-muwāḍaʿah*) and not on evidence. ‘As for the comprehension of the method of the conventions of the language, it consists of two types: direct and intermediary, the direct constitutes hearing and the intermediary constitutes the reported transmission.

Ibn Bājjah’s Transition

At the same period when Ibn Tūmart was spreading his call and endeavouring to organise his movement in the Maghreb in preparation for the overthrow of the Almoravid dynasty, Ibn Bājjah, Abū Bakr bin al-Ṣāʿigh (AH 475–533) (Abū-Bakr Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Ṣāʿigh bin Bājjah also known as Avempace) was producing a new philosophical rhetorical discourse within the locus of *burhān* alone, without being occupied with the support of *bayān* or the establishment *ʿirfān* as well as without being integrated with Neo-Platonic interpretations. It was the discourse of ‘the abandonment of imitation and the return to fundamentals’ in the field of philosophy as well. And if it is difficult, according to our present state of knowledge, to establish *direct* links between Ibn Bājjah and Ibn Tūmart, or between him and between the legacy of Ibn Ḥazm, undoubtedly and unquestionably, the trend of innovation in the Maghreb and Andalusia, whether

in terms of religious creed or the *sharī'ah* or the language or philosophy, was a single stream related with all its affiliates and branches to Ibn Ḥazm, in one way or another. Thus, if the call of Ibn Tūmart for the abandonment of imitation and reversion to fundamentals reverts directly, in terms of religious creed, the *sharī'ah* and language to the initiative of Ibn Ḥazm in its 'explicatory-*bayānī*' aspect, as is readily apparent in the paragraph we have allocated to him, the tendency of Ibn Bājjah to perceive Aristotle through Aristotle himself, by resorting solely to the texts he wrote and by rejecting Hermetic and Neo-Platonic interpretations and their Avicennian extensions had led him to restore, or to consider recovering, the plan of Ibn Ḥazm in its aspect of demonstration/proof (*burhān*). And as we have illustrated previously, the plan of Ibn Ḥazm was two-fold: it was both ideological and philosophical. Thus, just as he required a political authority to adopt the *bayānī* side as an ideology, namely, as a foundation of the legislative and creedal system of the state, he was also in need of an intellectual authority to deepen the *burhānī* side of it in order to transform it into a philosophy, namely into an intellectual and ethical system leading ultimately towards the happiness of the individual as well as society. Ibn Tūmart took on the first task while Ibn Bājjah undertook the second task. Therefore, just as Ibn Tūmart was practising politics in religion purposing towards changing the prevailing political reality, Ibn Bājjah was practising politics in philosophy purposing towards the establishment of a new intellectual and ideal 'reality'.

In fact, Ibn Bājjah, with his own philosophical plan, was practising politics in philosophy, yet not employing an ideological discourse, but utilising a philosophical one. Indeed, what draws attention to the discourse of Ibn Bājjah was his liberty not just from the political constraints hindering philosophy before him, but his liberation also from the epistemological constraints from which philosophy suffered within Arab culture in his period, until it was conjoined with those constraints and they became a basic element in its structure, we mean by those constraints or epistemological hindrances inherited by theology on the one hand, and by Hermetism and Neo-Platonism on the other. The liberation from theology in Andalusia and the Maghreb (or rather their absence there) had liberated the philosophical rhetorical discourse of Ibn Bājjah from the problematic of reconciling between transmitted tradition and reasoning, just as liberation from Hermetism and its concerns had freed the same discourse from the abuse of science by conjoining religion with philosophy and philosophy with religion, leading to the situation where it – science – returned to be as it was with Aristotle, the basis upon which philosophy was established. Hence, the substance for cogni-

sance with which Ibn Bājjah dealt in his philosophical rhetoric discourse was an essentially scientific one, and with this description we mean to suggest that he depended entirely on the science of his period, namely the natural sciences of Aristotle, in order to establish his philosophical dream which he invested in his treatises on ‘divinity’, and in particular his treatise *Tadbīr al-Mutawahhīd* (*The Contemplation of the Solitary*) that carries an entirely new ‘scientific’ and philosophical initiative described by Ibn Rushd as being ‘unprecedented among any of the ancients’, an initiative charted by the intellectual methodology of the individual who intends to become a philosopher in his life, and after his death intends to belong to the ‘immortals’ among philosophers and scholars, in a meeting of the minds or even a ‘divine’ one, transcending time and space. And since this is not the period to elaborate on the philosophical initiative of Ibn Bājjah and the characteristics of his discourse,⁴⁸ we will confine ourselves here to highlighting the most important issues that are relevant to us, that is, those which determine or by which is determined his attitude concerning ‘*irfān*’ and *bayān* and his mode of practising the *burhān*.

If we flip through the pages of the discourse of Ibn Bājjah, we will find him considering Aristotle the basic element of his referential framework, not the ‘Aristotle’ mentioned in anthologies and other spurious pseudoepigraphical texts, but rather the genuine Aristotle: Aristotle the philosopher and scientist, the First Master. Indeed, in Ibn Bājjah’s discourse, we find Plato, but not as a referential authority rather as an opinion giver mentioned to consult or to reject and to whom to respond; we also find al-Fārābī, yet, not al-Fārābī with the theory of *al-fayḍ* (emanation) or the ‘combinator of the two authorities’ but al-Fārābī the Second Master and the interpreter of Aristotle. As for al-Fārābī of the perfect state (utopia) he is mentioned just as Plato is mentioned and in the same context. Ibn Sīnā on the other hand is not mentioned, and this cannotes a particular indication or significance: keeping silent about Ibn Sīnā implies divergence from his Hermetic inclination and his Oriental gnostic philosophy. This is in regard to the referential authority of the rhetorical discourse of Ibn Bājjah. As for the general perception employed in producing this discourse of his, we find ourselves facing an actual return to the cosmology of Aristotle, and consequently facing a total divergence from the Ptolemaic holistic system predicated on the metaphysics of emanation. Thence, the ‘rupture’ with the cosmological basis of ‘*irfān*’ had occurred. And here we must note the mistake of lining Ibn Bājjah with al-Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā regarding the issue of ‘communication/communion’ (*al-ittiṣāl*) through the reason’, which is a common mistake in recent studies; since Ibn Bājjah

discusses this issue in its pure original Aristotelian framework, and not from the point of view of the idea of ‘emanation’ which he does not promote and which, furthermore, is *not* reflected in his thoughts nor does he think within its general framework. Knowledge/cognisance for Ibn Bājjah is not, and would not be, by way of emanation, but through the method of inferential evidence – *al-burhān*, by the transition from the perceptual to the reasonable, from the personified to the abstract, from truthful and certain premises to the conclusions necessitated by them.

Accordingly, Ibn Bājjah was very keen to distinguish between *al-tawḥīd* (the divine oneness/solitariness) on which he had composed his famous treatise *Tadbīr al-Mutawāḥḥid* and between ‘Sufism’ and the method of mysticism. *Al-tawḥīd* for him is a rational conduct, the goal of which is to acquire evidential and theoretical knowledge on the reality of the universe and the position of the human being in it, whereas the invocation of the Sufis including *al-kashf* (disclosure) is mere illusion, because the ‘witnessing’ (*al-mushāhadah*) which they allege is a psychological state resulting – according to Ibn Bājjah – from the engagement of the three powers of the soul, the common sense, the imagination and the memory, through the so-called spiritual exercises and endeavours so they focus on one image with their reason drawn by their imagination concerning the theme with which they are occupied in solving – the thing they call ‘union’ – so this theme would come to their minds in the form of a ‘spiritual image’ (that is *mental* and *immaterial*) clear and filled as if it were perceived by the senses ‘so such a one witnesses a miraculous effect . . . and therefore the Sufis have claimed that the achievement of the ultimate joy can be reached without knowledge, but through engagement, and that a blink of an eye can not be free from absolutism, because whenever it does so, the three powers could be combined and such would be possible’, and Ibn Bājjah adds: ‘and all this is a mere assumption, and by acting according to an assumption and the act of those who suppose that this is something extrinsic to nature . . .?’ Ibn Bājjah remarks elsewhere on the assertion of al-Ghazālī that he had ‘perceived when he abandoned divine issues and felt a great joy’ by saying: ‘all these are assumptions and things he [al-Ghazālī] establishes as ideal examples of the truth, yet the issue of this man has been exposed . . . and it was obvious that he was mistaken or confused by imaginary conceptions of the truth.’ It is a clear position with regard to the illuminationist system of *ʿirfān*: the attitude of absolute rejection, not on the basis of religious or polemical considerations, but on the basis of a ‘scientific’ and psychological analysis of the phenomenon of Sufi ‘witnessing’. So, what is the attitude of Ibn Bājjah towards the explicatory system of *bayān*?

We have previously emphasised the liberation of the discourse of Ibn Bājjah from the problematic of theology and its preoccupation, and consequently his philosophical discourse was a pure philosophical discourse moving within the locus of demonstration of the ‘*burhān*’, the circle of philosophy and science. As for the locus of religion, and consequently the device of ‘*bayān*’, he deals with it as an independent one, based on revelation which is, for him, one of the ‘divine gifts’ that exists ‘not voluntarily and a person has nothing to do with its existence and has no influence in this category [philosophical], and also it exists rarely in a person among people, therefore, this category of existing things is neither originally created (i.e., knowledge) nor anything else through human interference’. Ibn Bājjah separates *bayān* and the *burhān*, religion and philosophy, and he says: ‘the good predecessors have said this potentiality consists of two kinds: a natural kind and a divine kind. The natural is conceived through science and the human being is able to achieve it by himself. As for the divine kind, it is conceived with a divine aid, and therefore, Allāh sent messengers and raised up prophets in order to inform us people concerning the divine potentialities as He, Most Magnificent is His Name, intended science for the sake of perfecting His gift to humanity.’⁴⁹

Ibn Rushd: Reconnecting Burhān and Bayān

The abandonment of *irfān* and the separation between *bayān* and *burhān*, mirrored the discourse of Ibn Rushd, who embraced the initiative of Ibn Ḥazm, through Ibn Tūmart and Ibn Bājjah, albeit at another level, one deeper and richer. Averroes – Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin Rushd – (AH 520–595) says, according to what was narrated by one of his disciples: ‘I was called by Abū Bakr Ibn Ṭufayl one day, so he said to me: “I have heard that the Commander of the Faithful is complaining anxiously concerning Aristotle’s expression, or that of those who translated his work”, and he continues with ambiguous intentions saying: “if these books were summarized and their intentions were elucidated after deep contemplation, their intents would be accessible to people, so if you still have any strength do so, I hope you will accomplish this as I know of the high quality of your intellect and the clarity of your reason and the strength of your inclination towards this art” [i.e., the art of composing in philosophy]’.⁵⁰ As for Ibn Ṭufayl (AH 506–581), he is the famous philosopher, a friend to Ibn Rushd, and among his work only his treatise known as *Ḥay bin Yaḡzān* has reached us, in which he presents in an interesting

narrative from the ‘Oriental Philosophy’ described by Ibn Sīnā as, for him, being ‘the truth that includes no ambiguity’ as we have seen in the previous chapter. Ibn Ṭufayl was a physician and a high-ranking functionary of the Almohad dynasty from the time of the real founder ‘Abd al-Mu‘min bin ‘Alī, the right-hand man of Maḥdī bin Tūmart. ‘The Commander of the Faithful’ mentioned in the text is Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf bin ‘Abd al-Mu‘min, who ruled the caliphate after the death of his father in AH 558. Like Ibn Rushd, this Almohad caliph combines cognisance in religious knowledge and interest in philosophy and its knowledge. He was the ‘al-Ma‘mūn’ of the Almohad dynasty who surrounded himself with a group of scholars and jurists and philosophers, and he endeavoured to collect books of various kinds until he had as many books as Ḥakam II al-Mustanṣir, the ‘al-Ma‘mūn’ of the Umayyad dynasty in Andalusia. Yet this caliph did not collect books just for decoration but rather to study them, and he noticed the ‘apprehension about Aristotle’s expression(s)’ and consequently ‘the ambiguity of his aims’ might constitute an obstacle in the way of the spread of philosophy and its dissemination among people, so he asked Ibn Ṭufayl to work on summarising the books of Aristotle and to uncover their intent ‘after he had long pondered them in order to declaim their aims to people’. But Ibn Ṭufayl, for one reason or another, assigned this mission to Ibn Rushd.

The matter then, yet again, pertains to a task ordered by the state, and consequently it was part of a conscious cultural strategy. But why was it Aristotle in particular? And why couldn’t the ‘apprehension about Aristotle’s expression(s)’ be bypassed through replacing it with expressions from al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā when they were clear and contained no ambiguity? And were ‘the aims of Aristotle’ still genuinely ambiguous in the second century AH, namely after almost more than a quarter of a century after the death of Ibn Sīnā? These are questions which we cannot answer except by returning to the ideological initiative of the Almohad dynasty as formulated by Ibn Tūmart, the plan that he established under the slogan: ‘the abandonment of imitation and the return to fundamentals’. And here concerning philosophy, the ‘abandonment of imitation’ connoted the abandonment of the explanations and interpretations of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. As for the ‘return to fundamentals’, it connoted the return to *Aristotle* in particular.

However, this is only one dimension of the plan. As for the other, it is related to the religious creed (*‘aqīdah*) and the *sharī‘ah* as we know. And here, we will find the *fiqh madhab* for which Ibn Ḥazm had fought the authority that imposed it, the authority of the Almohad dynasty which would also endeavour – as soon as the situation would settle as it proved its competence for the ‘caliphate’ through calls for *jihād* against the

Europeans of north Andalusia – imposing and disseminating its ideology by force. The author of the book *al-Muḥab fī Talkhīṣ Akhbār al-Maghreb* (*The Valuable Book Summarising the Reports of the Maghreb*) tells that the jurist Abū Bakr al-Ḥāfiẓ bin al-Jadd had said: ‘When I went in to the Commander of the Faithful Abū Ya‘qūb for the first time, I went in and found the book of Ibn Yūnis [on the Māliki *madhab*] in his hands, he said to me: “Abū Bakr, look at these manifold opinions that were innovated into the religion of Allāh. Have you ever seen, O Abū Bakr, that a single issue has four or five interpretations or even more, so, which of these assertions is the truth and which one should the would-be imitator [of an opinion] consider?” So I began showing him what he was confused about, and he stopped me and said: O Abū Bakr, there is nothing but *this* and he pointed at the Qurʾān or *that* and pointed to the book of *sunnah* – the *ḥadīth* collection of Abū Dāwūd and it was on his right, or the sword.’⁵¹ And the same source says that his son Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr (who ruled the caliphate from AH 580 to 595): ‘and during his rule *‘ilm al-furū‘* [lit., the knowledge of derivative branches in *fiqh*] was discontinued, and the *fuqahā* feared him, and he ordered burning the books of the *madhab* [i.e., the Māliki *madhab*] after he rendered it devoid of the words of the Prophet and the Qurʾān, so he did that, and he burned it throughout the country . . . and he forbade people from engaging in the discipline of independent opinion (*‘ilm al-ra’y*) and getting involved in any of it, and he threatened a great punishment for this practice . . . so, he intended – in general – to wipe out the Māliki school of thought from the Maghreb once again and to drive people towards the manifest and apparent meanings of things in the Qurʾān and prophetic tradition.’⁵² It must be noted here that the expansion of the Zāhiri movement to the field of syntax where we find Ibn Maḍā’ al-Qurṭubī (AH 513–592) assigned by Abū Ya‘qūb as the supreme judge, composing a book entitled *al-Radd ‘alā al-Nuḥāt* (*Reply to the Syntacticians*) where he promoted the adoption of causal bases in syntax and he called for the abandonment of analogy in syntax and the adoption of it in accordance with what is heard/known to the ear (*al-samā‘*) – namely through the ‘manifest’ – just as had been done in *fiqh*.

This driving of people towards the ‘manifest/apparent meanings’ of the Qurʾān, the *ḥadīth* and language, and issuing orders to interpret the books of Aristotle and to elucidate their intentions and clarify their aims to the people, all implies the adoption of *bayān* and *burhān* and their fundamentals, and consequently the abandonment of *‘irfān* totally – not only because its combination with the ‘manifest’ on the one hand, and with the *burhān* on the other could not be valid conceptually, but also because it constituted

the ideological underpinnings of the opponents of the Almohad dynasty abroad (the Fāṭimids) and at home (the esoteric Sufis). And the question here is: how did Ibn Rushd, the philosopher of the state and its jurist, the supreme judge, work on the re-establishment of the relation between the *bayān* and the *burhān*?

If we consider the discourse of Ibn Rushd from this point of view, we will find it reverting to the plan of Ibn Ḥazm and surpassing it at the same time; he reverts to it as a starting point and inclination, and surpasses it in content and substance. And this is a clear and justified thing as Ibn Ḥazm was a contemporary of Ibn Sīnā, and it is very unlikely that he could have been acquainted with any of the latter's books, and consequently, the attempt of Ibn Sīnā (*al-shaykh al-ra'īs*, lit., the chief sheikh) to establish the *'irfān* on the basis of *burhān* and the foundation of an 'Oriental philosophy' against the Aristotelian philosophy would be totally absent from the purview of Ibn Ḥazm's thinking. As for Ibn Rushd, he would find himself confronting not only Ibn Sīnā and his Oriental philosophy but also facing al-Ghazālī and his attack on philosophy in the name of the Ash'arite religious creed, in addition to his attempt to establish *'irfān* on the basis of *bayān* in his Hermetic Sufism. Therefore, Ibn Rushd would be bound to establish the strategy of his discourse by moving on four fronts:

1. Interpreting Aristotle, summarising his book, eliminating 'apprehension' surrounding his expressions and removing 'ambiguity' from his aims as well as explaining these to the general public. And Ibn Rushd composed many books in this regard, of which there were the lengthy tracts, the medium-sized and the brief synopses.
2. Exposing 'deviations' of Ibn Sīnā, and he did so in his book *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*) when he was responding to the 'confusion' caused by al-Ghazālī, and in his other books (annotations and summaries).
3. Responding to al-Ghazālī: first through his considering him to be pugnacious among philosophers, and to this purpose he devoted his book *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* and responding to him and the Ash'arites at large; second, to the Ash'arites' accusations that philosophers are unbelievers, and their consideration that logic and philosophy are forbidden, which was the theme of his book *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl* (*The Decisive Thesis in What is Between Wisdom and the Sharī'ah of a Connection*) where he demonstrates that perception via logic and philosophy is a legal duty.

4. Theorising for the methodology of ‘the adoption of the manifest’ and the invalidation of the methodology implemented by theologians and Sufis, and he allocated for this purpose his book *al-Kashf ‘an Manāhij al-Adillah fī ‘Aqā'id al-Millah wa Ta'rif mā Waqa' fihā bi-Ḥasab al-Ta'wīl min al-Shubuh al-Muzīghah wa al-Bida' al-Muḍillah* (*Disclosing the Methodology of Evidence Implemented in the Religious Creed of the Sect and Identifying what Resulted in it from the Interpretations of the Wayward Doubts and Misleading Heresies*).

We will look briefly at the general content of the discourse of Ibn Rushd in regard to these four fronts and focus on the aspect that primarily concerns us, which is related to the method suggested by him to re-establish the relation between the *bayān* and the *burhān*.⁵³

The discourse of Ibn Rushd is entirely based on regarding religion and philosophy as independent structures where one must seek the truthfulness in them intrinsically and not extrinsically. And the required truthfulness is the truthfulness of demonstration, inference through evidence, and not the truthfulness of premises. As the premises in religious matters, as well as in philosophy, are positivist fundamentals which ought to be adopted *without evidence*. Consequently: ‘If the arts of deriving inferential evidence contain in their principles restrictions and positivist fundamentals, so how proper would it be if such exist in the laws derived from the Revelation and reason?’⁵⁴ And, therefore ‘the sage philosophers ought not debate and engage in discourse on the principles of the laws. This is because every art has its own principles, and it is a duty for he who is concerned with any given art to recognise its principles and not contradict them through denial or invalidation; thus, the art of legal practice ought to be as such.’⁵⁵ As the philosopher ought not contradict the fundamentals and principles upon which religion is based because they are fixed already, similarly the cleric ought not contradict philosophical issues unless acquiring their fundamentals and principles. He addresses al-Ghazālī saying: ‘The aspect of objection to these philosophers in these things is actually accepted by the early scholars who employed them in demonstrating/clarifying these things, not in these things themselves,’⁵⁶ and he also says that ‘the discourses of philosophers – with this man (i.e., al-Ghazālī) – concerning this issue is based on fundamentals which should be put forth in order for him to then engage in discourse on them, so, if it was admissible for them for what they had established for it, and alleged that the proof had led them towards it, then nothing would necessitate their accepting these objections.’⁵⁷ The lack of respect demonstrated by al-Ghazālī towards this methodological principle had made ‘most contentions for which he was opposed to them

are considered doubts which are exposed when some of their contentions contradicted others and resemblance of the differences between them are exposed, and that is an incomplete objection, and the complete objection is what leads to the invalidation of their *madhab* according to the issue itself and not according the assertion of the one making it'.⁵⁸

Ibn Rushd sought an excuse for al-Ghazālī so he says that he had not studied philosophy thoroughly but he acquired such knowledge through the categorical assertions and categories of Ibn Sīnā: 'thus, he had deficiencies on this issue'. And Ibn Sīnā, according to Ibn Rushd, had not respected the fundamentals of philosophy or the method of demonstration through evidence when he presented them, as he resorted, just as theologians did, to the analogy of what is unseen with what is evident, and he opened the path for them to cause confusion in philosophy after he had deviated in some of its basic issues. Ibn Rushd says: 'the path followed by Ibn Sīnā in proving the first principle is the method of the theologians, and his thesis was always midway between the Peripatetics and *mutakallimūn* [theologians]'.⁵⁹ Ibn Rushd asserts elsewhere: 'Ibn Sīnā made many mistakes in this, and he thought that oneness and existence together implied additional properties of self. And it was genuinely surprising how such a man could fall into such an error when he used to attend to the lectures of the Ash'arite theologians, in fact, those for whom he combined between his divine knowledge and their discourses'.⁶⁰ And among the principles in which Ibn Sīnā did not comply with the method of inferential evidence and did not respect the principles of the demonstrative reason (*al-'aql al-burhānī*), in particular the principle of 'the excluded middle/the third principle' is the principle of the so-called 'possible by/in itself and necessary by/through other than itself', which is the principle of the excluded middle set by Ibn Sīnā between 'the possible' and 'the necessary' as an intermediate compromise to solve the dilemma of the eternity of the world, as he said that the world 'is possible by itself', namely an occurrence, and in this he pleased the theologians, but he says at the same time that the world is 'necessary by other' (i.e., Allah), namely eternal, and in this he pleased philosophers. Ibn Rushd rejects this 'principle of the excluded middle' that combines between the two opposite extremes. He says: 'this addition in my opinion was superfluous and erroneous, because what is necessary, however it was imposed, does not include what is possible in the first place, and there is nothing of the same nature. And of this nature one could say that it was possible on the one hand and necessary on the other, because the possible is juxtaposed in apposition to the necessary'.⁶¹ Ibn Rushd attacks Ibn Sīnā's and al-Fārābī's theory of emanation (*al-fayḍ*) as attributed to al-Fārābī and he describes it as 'entirely of myths and more inept than the allegations of

the theologians'. He also criticises the opinions of Ibn Sīnā on the issue of the divine knowledge for it depends along with the opinions of the theologians on mere analogy of the unseen (i.e., the knowledge of God) through the evident (i.e., the knowledge of the human beings).

However, if Ibn Rushd seeks some excuses for al-Ghazālī on this and similar issues, for which he holds Ibn Sīnā responsible as he who strove to combine the religious issues with the philosophical issues, and to perceive these through those, he vehemently criticises the allegations of the theologians, and the Ash'arites in particular – at the forefront of whom was al-Ghazālī – those he described as 'leading people to fall' (due to their interpretations and doubtful suppositions) into hatred and mutual detestation and wars, and they have disrupted laws and split apart people in every way. In addition to all that, the methods they followed in proving their interpretations lack consistency with those of the general or the specific, because if they are examined they will be found inadequate to the conditions of evidentiary proof [*burhān*] . . . but many of the fundamentals upon which the Ash'arites have founded their knowledge are sophistic, thus, abjuring a great deal of the necessitations such as the evidence of indications and the mutual influence of things and the existence of the things necessary for causality and the essential forms and instrumentalities. And the encroachment of their advocates on Muslims in this sense had reached the point where a group of the Ash'arites considered whoever does not acknowledge the existence of the Lord through the methods they have established for such cognisance in their books to be an infidel, and it is they who are disbelievers and astray from the truth.⁶²

And if Ibn Rushd had not criticised in detail the Mu'tazilite *madhab*, it was for the reason that their books had not reached Andalusia, as he says; and, thus, he associates them with the Ash'arites in terms of their methods of perception 'similar to the methods of the Ash'arites'.⁶³ As for the *ḥashawīyah* [a pejorative used by al-Jāḥiẓ and others meaning *the stuffers* and referring to the collectors of *ḥadīth* who 'stuffed' their religion with chaff or '*ḥashw*'], those who 'said that the means for knowing the existence of God Almighty is by hearing (*al-sam'*), [i.e., that which is heard, implying transmitted tradition, *al-naql*] and not reasoning . . . thus, it is apparent that they were lacking in their understanding of the intent of the law in its being indicated for all . . . and he called for belief in the existence of the God [*al-bārī*] through the indications of reason that are textually specified.⁶⁴ As for the 'esoteric sect that is called *al-bāṭinīyah*', which consists of the fourth sect in the categories of which Ibn Rushd discussed before beginning to explain the 'explanatory' *bayānī* method that he advocates

to prove religious truths, he responds to them through the response to Sufism seeing that they both adopt the illuminationism of ‘*irfān*’ as a source of knowledge. He says: ‘as for the Sufis, their methods in perception are not theoretical methods, I mean consisting of premises and syllogisms, but they claim that the knowledge of Allāh and other existences is something projected in the soul when it is liberated from the accidents of the appetitive desires/instincts . . . and we say that: these methods, even if we admit their existence, are not generally for the masses of people. And, if this were generally the method for the people, then, the method of perception would be invalid and the existence of people would be absurd, and the entire Qur’ān constitutes calls to perceive, to consider and to inform perception.’⁶⁵

This was an overview of the criticism by Ibn Rushd of Ibn Sīnā and the theologians due to their confusion between ‘Qur’ānic explication’ (*bayān*) and philosophical and controversial issues. As for the method he suggests to deal with the religious rhetorical discourse as an independent structure, it is based on the three following principles:

The first principle asserts that religious rhetorical discourse is always consistent with what reason decrees, either through its apparent and manifest (*ẓahir*) indications or through its interpretations. And interpretation (*al-ta’wīl*) has limits and conditions as we shall see.

The second principle is that the Qur’ān explains itself, and this implies that if there is a verse contradicting the apparent meaning of what is reconcilable with rational proof (*al-burhān al-‘aqlī*), there must be another verse in which the apparent meaning bears witness to the true and intended meaning of the first verse, namely the significance of which is consistent with reason.

As for the ‘third’ principle of the excluded middle, it determines what shall be interpreted and what shall not. In this regard, Ibn Rushd decides that religion is based on three fundamentals that absolutely ought not be interpreted, they are: assertion of the existence of Allāh, prophethood and the Last Day. Everything else is apt to be interpreted, but under three conditions: the first condition is the respect of the characteristics of Arab style in terms of expression, seeing that interpretation is nothing but ‘extracting utterances from their real indication/connotation – that is the *ẓahir* into the metaphorical/allegorical *majāzī* connotation that is the *bāṭin* without contradiction in the utilisation of the Arabic language mode by calling similar things with the same name or its cause or what follows it or its comparison or other things that are used and customarily defined in metaphorical discourse [*al-kalām al-majāzī*].’⁶⁶ The second condition is the respect of the internal unity of the religious utterance, thus, it is inadmissible to include strange things outside the normative context of their original discursive or

deliberative usage as it was employed in the days of the Prophet, and consequently, there is no room for the introduction of Hermetic conceptions or philosophical theories into the religious edifice of Islam, for such is extrinsic to normative usage and it disrupts internal unity. And the third condition is: the consideration of the cognitive level of the persons to whom these interpretations are addressed. So the *cultural* level must be taken into consideration. Therefore, the classification of religious utterances into ‘apparent/manifest’ (*ẓāhir*) and ‘esoteric’ (*bāṭin*) according to Ibn Rushd does only mean the distinction between what is real and what is metaphoric. The classification of people into an ‘elite’ and ‘common masses’ implies not only the distinction between those who have reached a sufficient level of theoretical knowledge – evidentiary and reasonable – and these people interpret for themselves and for their equals, but also between the public whose cognisance and culture does not attain to that level and consequently they are ‘not able to believe except through imagination’ and the propounding of similitudes. Indeed, the classification of the religious utterance into manifest (*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*) is not consistent with the classification of people into common masses and elite, so the esoteric is not strictly particular to the elite, nor is the manifest particular to the masses. But the admittance of the manifest includes scholastics and the public in issues that do not require reasoning such as the determination of the period of fasting or when to break the fast or prayers and so on; such matters can be justified by use of reason. In other words, the difference between the cognisance of the elite and the cognisance of the masses is a difference of levels and not a difference in kind: thus, there are not two truths but only one. And this belies the assertion of the Sufis and the followers of esotericism that the cognisance of the elite, namely the *irfān*, is different in kind from other kinds of human cognisance.

This methodology of the ‘manifest’ also, is based on the respect of the internal unity of the text and the hermeneutical reading of it and avoiding the introduction of strange elements outside of its original discursive usage, and therefore, dealing with it, consequently, as an independent structure establishing particular principles and fundamentals, which are meant to stay untouched as otherwise the entire structure may be distorted, and where every element derives its connotation from its location and utilisation within the whole. With this axiomatic methodology of the ‘manifest’ then, the philosopher of Cordoba had explained Aristotle through Aristotle himself, namely by reverting to the latter’s own opinions, examining them and referring them to their origins, that is, to the principles and premises underlying them, and through seeking evidentiary indications from within the Aristotelian system itself. This enabled him to salvage the philosophy

of the First Master from the impurities accruing to it during the Hellenistic era and during the Islamic era until the days of Ibn Rushd. It is this kind of interpretation based on '*al-ijtihād*' (independent judgement) and governed by conscious and stable axiomatic perception, which highlights the true originality of Ibn Rushd, as the ideas generated by him through demonstration are various, and he relates them implicitly or explicitly to Aristotle to the extent that the scope of the Aristotelian order tolerates them or even contains them on the one hand, and because it shortens the distance between Aristotelian perception and the Islamic perception on the other hand, yet, without letting the obsession of the 'reconciliation', or the 'unification' between philosophy and religion dominate such, which might have otherwise led him to attribute to Aristotle what he did not say or to attempt to burden the Islamic text with meanings it does not bear.

Therefore, 'what constitutes the religion' is not mere 'idealised examples of what is in philosophy', but each is its own particular entity and possessed of its own methodology. However, this does not imply that they are contradictory, but rather the contrary, as 'wisdom is the companion of the law and its sister . . . and they are naturally paired and amicable in terms of essence and instinct'. Yet this is due to the fact that they both tend towards the same aim which is: the cognisance of the truth 'and the truth is not contradicted by the truth but it is consistent with it and it evidences it'.⁶⁷ If one of the two truths was harmed in the name of the other, then, this has occurred by whoever claims to be affiliated to them. Thus, the harm that came to religion came from the *mutakallimūn* (theologians), with their dialectical method followed by the method of describing what is unseen through what is evident is based on the combination between two completely different worlds, the natural world and the metaphysical one, the world of the unseen and the world of evidence – what is witnessed. While the act of evidencing could not be correct, as Ibn Rushd says, 'except when the transmission is reasonable itself, and that is the case when there is a parity between the nature of what is unseen and what is evident'.⁶⁸ And this condition is not fulfilled in this domain, because the world of the unseen is an absolute world, whereas the world of evidence is a finite one, and therefore one cannot be compared with the other.

As a consequence, do we need to reiterate that we are here confronting a completely new re-establishment, or a complete restructuring of the relation between the explication/indication of the *bayān* and the demonstration by inferential evidence of the *burhān* and on the basis of a realistic

and reasonable perception of things, a perception dealing with religious ‘reality’ and philosophical ‘reality’ with a spirit of criticism respecting the givens of reality yet without surrendering to them or allowing it to encompass them, but on the contrary, striving to contain it and endeavouring to restructure it and enrich it? It is a genuine new beginning for Arab thought, the one that was initiated by Ibn Ḥazm and the one for which Ibn Tūmart worked to ‘construct’ the instrument/authority, the necessary objective condition for its viability and its persistence, while Ibn Bājjah worked on deepening its rational content – the inner condition necessary for its growth and rooting. With the complementarity and realisation of the objective condition and the inner condition and their mutual inoculation, Ibn Rushd emerged to restructure this beginning with deeper conscious and realistic rationalism, more mature than before, which would render it capable of opening up entirely new horizons.

Sufi Resurgence and the Triumph of *al-Taqlīd*

Indeed, Averroism was able to open up entirely new horizons, and this is what actually happened; yet in *Europe* where it was in operation and not in the Arab world where it was suffocated in its infancy and where there was and has been no response to its first cry, the cry of birth, not even an echo until today.

Why was this suffocation? Why did the advancement of Arab thought cease as soon as it found its way towards advancement?

We described in Chapter Two what we called the ‘dichotomous Arab reality’ governing Arab intellectual life since the Era of Codification until today, represented by the interference of cultural eras in Arab thought on the one hand, and the separation of time and space within Arab cultural history and consequently, the absence of cultural synchronisation at the level of the Arab nation on the other hand. Thus, if we contemplate the Maghreb-Andalusian experience, the contours of which we have traced in the preceding pages, from the angle of the aspect of particularity established by the absence of cultural synchronisation at the level of the Arab world, we will find ourselves facing an *independent cultural time*, distinct, entirely separate from the cultural time advocated by Ibn Sīnā and which al-Ghazālī strove to draw and disseminate. However, if we ponder the same experience described as one of the ‘general’ aspects that is based, in all of Arab thought, by the interference of (different) cultural times, we

will find ourselves confronted by the fading half-light of a candle at the point just before it is extinguished.

In fact, in the previous pages we emphasised, in the Maghreb-Andalusian cultural experience, one aspect over the other. We drew attention to the bright side which had formal sovereignty and which was expressing the ideological cultural plan opposing the ‘Abbāsids and Fāṭimids, but we remained silent – just as we should have kept silent given that it would not have been right to speak of two contradictory aspects at the same time – concerning another current. It was a small and confined trend which fought until the last days of Ibn Rushd, an esoteric stream associated substantively, if not autonomously, with the ideology of the Fāṭimid dynasty. This was related to the Andalusian Hermetic esoteric school, founded by Muḥammad ‘Abdullah bin Masarraḥ al-Jabalī, born in Cordoba in AH 269 and died in AH 319, who was of *Bāṭinī* sympathies. And whether this school had political aspirations since its establishment or not, it established in Andalusia a stream of the ‘resigned reason’ which promoted the Hermetic tenets attributed to pseudo-Empedocles, camouflaged in ‘Islamic’ guise reminiscent of the Sufism of al-Ḥallāj and the *ishtirākīyah* (social cooperative tendencies) of the Qarmatians. This trend persisted throughout the duration of the siege set against it, evolving numerous esoteric Sufi personalities who would play a role in the cultural life in Andalusia, and in political life as well, such as Ismā‘īl bin ‘Abdullah al-Ru‘aynī who lived in the late fourth century and Abū al-‘Abbās al-Ṣanḥājī Ibn al-‘Arīf (d. AH 536) who was a contemporary of Ibn Burjān. This latter was influenced by him and followed his method, and they both were among the sheikhs of ‘the Great Sheikh’ Muḥyī al-Dīn bin ‘Arabī (AH 560–638) who in his youth had met Ibn Rushd but whom he subsequently left when he could not find any ‘esoteric’ inclination in his teachings. Ibn ‘Arabī frequented one of the schools of Andalusia that secretly taught the doctrine of Neo-Empedocles replete with symbols and interpretations inherited from Pythagorean, Orphic and Indian naturalism, and this school was the only one teaching its students the mystic principles and symbolic teachings since the days of Ibn Masarraḥ.⁶⁹

In addition to this esoteric stream which was practising clandestinely in Andalusia, consecrating the products of ‘resigned reason’ since the Umayyad caliph ‘Abdul Raḥmān al-Nāṣir himself, the founder of the scientific and philosophical renaissance of Andalusia, there was in the Maghreb and Andalusia during the rule of the Almohad dynasty, a group of sheikhs and Meridids who consecrated ‘resigned reason’ as well in the name of ‘Sunni Sufism’ through the works of al-Ghazālī and in particular his book *al-Iḥyā’*. And if there is no place here to elaborate on the issue, at least we ought to

mention the ‘master of the era’, sheikh Abū Madyan ‘the succourer’ (*al-ghawth*) of the age who was a contemporary of Ibn Rushd. Abū Madyan (d. AH 594 in Tlemcen) was originally from Seville before he moved to Fez where he studied under sheikh Abū Ḥasan bin Harzaham who taught him the book *al-Riʿāyah* (*Protection*) by al-Maḥāsīnī, and al-Ghazālī’s *al-Iḥyāʾ*. Subsequently he moved to the East where he was taught by sheikh ‘Abdul Qādir al-Jīlānī, founder of the Qādirite (Sufi) order, before he travelled to the Maghreb and resided in the city of Bijayah until the end of his days, where ‘he was surrounded by people and where he had performed many miracles, so he was reported by some scholars of the manifest to Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr [Almohad caliphate mentioned previously] and it was said to him: “We fear for your state from him, as he seems to resemble the Imam Mahdī, and his followers are many. So he wrote message to the governor of Bijayah and asked him to send Abū Madyan and protect him” as he intended to test him. However, when Sheikh Abū Madyan was on his way to the caliph in Marrakech he died near Tlemcen so “he was carried by the people for burial in the cemetery of holy people”.⁷⁰

Sheikh Abū Madyan ‘*al-ghawth*’ was the spiritual father of the most important sheikhs of Sufism in the Maghreb, who played an essential role in overthrowing the Almohad dynasty. And if the incident of al-ʿIqāb in Andalusia where the caliph al-Nāṣir bin Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr was defeated in AH 608 was the greatest political incident that had led to the toppling of the Almohad dynasty from the apex of glory to the abyss of disintegration and dissolution, we must not forget that ‘the political and religious opposition against Almohads and the doctrine of unification had acquired over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE (sixth and seventh AH) this Sufi colour. It was led by individuals who were not professional scholars, but who were pious having spent most of their lives in rural areas and mountains and who, thus, constituted a special kind of religious current’,⁷¹ it was an extension of the stream engendered by the Seljuqs in the East and to whom al-Ghazālī had accorded ‘Sunni legitimacy’ as we have indicated in the previous chapter. And, just as this Sufi stream remained neutral *vis-à-vis* the Crusades in the East, ‘where many had thought these wars were a punishment from God Almighty upon the Muslims as they had sinned’, the Sufis of the Maghreb and Andalusia adopted the same attitude *vis-à-vis* the blows struck by the leaders of the Christian principalities in northern, western and eastern Spain against the presence of Arab Islam there, when the ‘Andalusian frontiers’ began falling into their hands in the north and east and west, while the Sufis were endeavouring or at least assisting in sabotaging the Almohad state from within, which

prompted its failure at the hands of the Merinians who, even if they had seized rule by force of their radicalism – according to Ibn Khaldūn – soon considered the ‘nobles’ and the Sufi men as their political base and considered the ‘service’ of these and the ‘love’ of those their ideological cause.

‘Resigned reason’ had triumphed, then, in the East and the Maghreb and the ‘word-knowledge’ belonged to the followers and disciples of Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Suhrawardī and their illuminationist Sufism immersed in the depths of Hermetism while the ‘word-authority’ became the domain of the sheikhs of the Sufi orders which formed, in every part of the Arab and Islamic world, a state within the state: the state of the ‘resigned reason’ within the state, or the states of the Age of Decline, the states of the centuries of medieval Islam. As for the ‘word-science’, the word of *bayān* and *burhān*, it was immobilised inside the mouths of the imitators including *fuqahā*’ and syntacticians on the one hand, and in the formalism of the later scholars among authors on theology and logic, on the other. Thus, despite the struggle, no matter how violent and severe, waged by Ibn Taymīyah (AH 661–628) against the followers of esotericism including Shi‘ites and Sufis, and against philosophers (especially Ibn Sīnā) and the Ash‘arites (especially al-Ghazālī) as well as against the Māliki and Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanafī schools of *fiqh* who belonged to the imitators, despite all that struggle waged by Ibn Taymīyah for the sake of the *bayān* in the name of Ḥanbali *madhab* inspired by the Zāhirism of Ibn Ḥazm and the method suggested by Ibn Rushd on the ‘methods of evidentiary proof’ (*manāḥij al-adillah*) – despite all this struggle – redoubled and on numerous fronts, sovereignty over Arab thought remained constrained within imitation of tradition (*al-taqlīd*) and formalism.

Perhaps the best qualified to inform us about this phenomenon is Ibn Khaldūn (AH 732–808) who experienced in close (historical) proximity the retreat of Arab-Islamic civilisation in various spheres ‘as if the tongue of the universe called the world to slumber and sloth so with regard to *al-taqlīd* (imitation) in *fiqh*: ‘Imitation ceased in all countries with those four (Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfah, Al-Shāfi‘ī and Ibn Ḥanbal) and it was inactivated – extinct – by the imitators for others and people had closed the door of contention and its means . . . so they announced their being helpless and deficient and reverted people to the imitation of those respectively, each imitator according to his affiliation, and they have forbidden consulting multiple sources of imitation for such entails manipulation’⁷³ (namely they have prohibited one person from variously consulting the four *madhāhib* [for the purpose of imitation] so that such an individual is obliged to choose only one *madhab* of the four and imitate it in regard to every issue), ‘and since the *madhab* of each imam had come to constitute a particular knowledge for the people

of the same *madhab*, and they were not able to resort to [the independent reasoning of] *ijtihād* or analogy, they have proclaimed the need to theorise the issues by [annexation through] referencing (*ilhāq*) and differentiating between them when there are doubtful matters after depending on the fundamental sources affiliated to the *madhab* of their imam [and its doctrine], and all this required a faculty or natural endowment capable of that kind of theorisation or differentiation, and following of the doctrine of their imam as much as they could, and this device is the science of *fiqh* of this era.⁷⁴

What does this kind of imitation imply at the epistemological level?

Fiqh is no longer an endeavour in *ijtihād* in the sense of deriving new legal rulings through analogy, as it was practised when it consisted of a means to consult the texts and produce knowledge – and when it used to be based on analysis of the fundamentals attaching to the legal ruling in order to extract its causal basis – *‘illah*, then to generalise for all (derivative) branches where the same causal basis is found.⁷⁵ Even *fiqh* became a faculty, namely a mental mechanism rooted unconsciously, based on ‘theorising issues by referencing and differentiating between them when there is doubt’, namely referring every theory to its theoriser and differentiating it from what could have been associated with it and which is not equivalent; or in other words, the combination between equivalences/equivalent things and differentiation between differences/different things, and in all that depending on the predetermined fundamentals of the *madhab*. The matter is then related to the operational practice of the mechanism of analogy, through the process of referencing, or differentiation and *not more*. And since the issues of jurisprudence in general consist of theoretical work, the process of ‘referencing and differentiating’ became similar to mathematical exercises ruled by a single law, rendering such – after some practice – nothing more than a *mental habit*. This was the import of the words of Ibn Khaldūn: ‘and all this required a faculty or natural endowment’. All this implies that the jurisprudential reason of *fiqh* had transformed into a ‘habituated reason’ or a [conditioned] mental faculty’. And needless to say that this ‘habituated reason’ dominating *fiqh* is the same that dominated syntactical and linguistic ‘analyses’, as the analogical reasoning of *al-qiyās* in both of them had developed into the selfsame ‘habit-reason’ when the practice of syntax was transformed into an ‘exercise’ in syntactical analysis for linguistic theoretical work.

As for *‘ilm al-kalām* (theology), the method of the later scholars launched by al-Ghazālī through producing the Aristotelian dialectical syllogism in presenting the issues of the Ash‘arite doctrine as we have indicated in the

previous chapter, had ended also in ‘stagnation in imitation’: thus, on the one hand ‘the radical Ash‘arites had come to dominate official teaching without competition, and the scholastics began to refer back to the issue of “divine will” in its most static form (and connotation), where they consistently attributed and subscribed to the total ineffectiveness of secondary causality for every action (or work) and influence/effect’ or in other words, the absolute denial of causality. And, on the other hand, ‘theology for the “later scholars” had not reached a level so as to be equivalent to an independent philosophy, even though it was intended to become a philosophy; consequently it led to stagnation through imitation. Among all the things that the “later scholars” brought, this imitation had only preserved a type of artificial scrutiny in providing evidences and putting them in the service of some issues that were extremely simple, for the purpose of excessive vigilance to constrain the *madhab*, or even a mere imitation of what was before.’⁷⁶

As for the logic, the ‘method of the later scholars’ was characterised also by immersion in pure formalism. Thus, after ‘the grand intention behind the art of logic had been to abide by proofs [*barāhīn*]’ as asserted by al-Fārābī who explained that ‘*Posterior Analytics*’ was the primary intent of logic (see Chapter Ten), we find those who worked on logic among the ‘later scholars’ reverting to its status during the Hellenistic era, the era of ‘resigned reason’, when some parts of the *Posterior Analytics* and the premises were expunged, and what was retained was the metaphoric dimension of analogy in particular. Ibn Khaldūn says: ‘then the later scholars came and changed the terminology of logic, and referred its outcome to theorising in the five universals, the fruit of which is the discourse on the limits and forms, which they called from the *Posterior Analytics* and removed the book of premises . . . and appended the to book on expressions discourse to the contrary . . . and they removed theorising in it according to matter, which consists of the five books: proof, argument, rhetoric, poetry and sophism . . . and they were oblivious to these as if they never existed, and these are crucial and must be depended upon in the art. Then, they declaimed on what they had posited of this borrowed discourse, and looked upon it as though it were the pinnacle of the art itself, and not as an instrument for knowledge . . . and the books of the ancient scholars and their methods had disappeared as though they had never been there, and these were filled with the fruits of logic and its benefits as we have mentioned.’⁷⁷

Undoubtedly, this development of the logic known to the ‘later scholars’ would be considered by modern logicians as a step ‘forward’ with regard

to logic, which had become purely academic and conceptual, persisting of itself and not dependent on the instruments of science or knowledge. However, we entertain a completely different opinion. Indeed, even if we consider pure formalism in modern logic contains nothing wrong, that is because it had been integrated into mathematics and vice versa, and it had become ‘the physics of a particular subject’, according to Konitz, while there are other kinds of ‘physics’, each of them is particular to a certain kind. Thus, if logic today is preoccupied with the veracity of formalism, and the veracity of demonstration/inference, and is not in any way concerned with material veracity, the veracity of premises, then that is because there are experimental scientific disciplines dealing with the issue of material veracity employing scientific empirical methods. Whereas, in the medieval Arab-Islamic era and others, negligence in the sector of proof in logic and concern for only the formal aspect of analogy was a step *backwards*. It was a return with logic to a time before al-Fārābī, to the Hellenistic era when the *Posterior Analytics* was a book forbidden by the Church as it raised the issue of the veracity of premises, and consequently the issue of ‘science’ in the Aristotelian sense of the word: certain knowledge based on ‘primary, necessary rational premises’. Therefore, the formalism prevailing in the study of logic within Arab culture after Ibn Rushd, was another aspect of the same phenomenon: it was an extension and facet of the same retrogression that occurred with regard to analogy (*qiyās*) in *fiqh*. So, just as analogy in jurisprudence was transformed into ‘a habitude of reason’ as we have indicated previously, logical syllogism was transformed also into a similar mechanism, into a ‘habit of reason’ based on the expropriation of whatever is required.

The victory of the illuminationism of *‘irfān* and the transformation of the indication of *bayān* into a mere ‘reason of habituation’ and the demonstration of *burhān* into ‘a habit of reason’, these were the essential manifestations of the phenomenon of *the resignation of reason* within Arab-Islamic culture during the Age of Decline. This resignation is still unabated and in effect today in many intellectual circles, if not almost all – to say nothing of the vast majority of the illiterate masses. Do we need examples to confirm this? Does the light of day require confirmation?

We will stop at this point and cast a glance on what we have highlighted and what we have refrained from mentioning during our journey with Arab reason in its composition, before moving to the analysis of its structure and to test its mechanism and the premises behind it.

Notes

1. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl fī al-Mīlal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal*. Ed. Egypt, p. 116; find in the footnote *al-Mīlal wa al-Niḥal* by Shahristānī.

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 115–16.

3. Transmitted from the words of Ibn Ḥazm by Ibn ‘Adhārī al-Marākishī, *Al-bayān al-Maghrib fī Akhbār al-Maghrib* (Beirut: Dār Ṣadr, 1950), p. 59.

4. Linbor Stanley, cited by Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Islām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyah, 1962), p. 176.

5. Balenthia, *Tārīkh al-Fikr al-Andalusī*, trans. Ḥusayn Mu’nis (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyah, 1955), p. 6.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 10; transmitted from Dūzī.

7. Ṣā‘id, *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam*, p. 88.

8. Balenthia, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

9. Ṣā‘id, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

10. It is known historically that states’ intellectual movements and ideological projects of the states do not produce their outcomes until after one or more generations, and this often occurs after this state, promoter of this project, had entered into decline, according to the terms of Ibn Khaldūn, and this could be true of course for the states of the Middle Ages in particular. As for the present time, it is different. Thus, popular communication mediums and modern methods of learning work on maturing and disseminating the intellectual and ideological movements rapidly.

11. Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Tārīkh al-Madbāhib al-Fiqhīyah* (Cairo: al-Madanī Press, [n.d.]), p. 376.

12. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Muḥallā* (Cairo: [n.pb.], AH 1347), p. 58.

13. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (Cairo : Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1978), p. 46.

14. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl*, p. 50.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

17. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām*, p. 111.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 80–88.

19. See Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Ibn Ḥazm* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, [n.d.]), pp. 364 ff and Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām*, pp. 106 ff and pp. 364 ff.

20. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Taqrīb li-Ḥadd al-Mantiq wa al-Madkhal Ilayh*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: publications of Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, [n.d.]), p. 168.

21. Ibn Ḥazm, *Risālat Marātib al-‘Ulūm*, first series, published by Iḥsān ‘Abbās, p. 64.

22. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Taqrīb li-Ḥadd al-Mantiq*, p. 10.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

24. It must be noted here that Ibn Ḥazm had preceded al-Ghazālī in giving examples concerning the logic with examples of the jurisprudence; however, the project of Ibn Ḥazm is completely different from the project of al-Ghazālī, thus, while this latter intended ‘debate’ from logic, as we indicated in the previous chapter, Ibn Ḥazm sought ‘proof’ from it. And in other words, al-Ghazālī intended to defend a pre-determined ‘knowledge’ while Ibn Ḥazm intended the *production* of ‘knowledge’.

25. Ṣā‘id, *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam*, p. 101.

26. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Taqrīb li-Ḥadd al-Mantiq*, pp. 13, 52, 54, 107.

27. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl*, p. 16.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

30. Ibid., p. 96.
31. Ibid., p. 36.
32. Ibid., p. 38.
33. Ibid., p. 2–11.
34. See his response on al-Bāqillānī and all the Ash‘arites.
35. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām*, pp. 69–70, 17–21.
36. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Muḥallā*, pp. 66–67.
37. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām*, p. 100.
38. Ibid., p. 66.
39. Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl*, p. 94.
40. Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Ibn Ḥazm*, p. 516.
41. Ibid., p. 522.
42. Published by Goldziher in Algeria in 1903.
43. We note here that we will be referring to paragraphs from our book *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth* concerning Ibn Tūmart, Ibn Bājjah and Ibn Rushd.
44. Ibn Tūmart, *A‘azzu mā Yuṭlab*, p. 8.
45. Ibid., p. 25.
46. Ibid., pp. 195–196.
47. Ibid., p. 168.
48. See our study on the emergence of philosophy in Morocco and Andalusia in *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*.
49. See the Divine Letters of Ibn Bājjah, ed. Majīd Fakhry (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1968), pp. 55, 52, 53, 121, 141.
50. See the complete text by ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marākishī, *Al-Ma‘jab fī Talkhīṣ Akhbār al-Maghrib* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyah al-Kubrā, 1949), p. 243.
51. Ibid., p. 279.
52. Ibid., pp. 278–9.
53. See our study on the school of philosophy in Morocco and Andalusia: Mashrū‘ Qirā‘ah Jadīdah li-Falsafat Ibn Rushd, in *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*.
54. Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Dar al-Ma‘ārif), p. 869.
55. Ibid., p. 791.
56. Ibid., p. 658.
57. Ibid., p. 525.
58. Ibid., p. 208.
59. Ibn Rushd, *Tafsīr al-Samā‘ al-Ṭabī‘ī*, mentioned by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: Dar al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyah, 1965), p. 285.
60. Ibn Rushd, *Tafsīr mā Ba‘da al-Ṭabī‘ah li-Aristū*, printed by Maurice Buige (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1938), p. 313.
61. Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, p. 603. Volume 2.
62. Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, pp. 323–332, published with the disclosure of the methodologies of evidences in one book under the title *Falsafat Ibn Rushd*. (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Maḥmūdīyah al-Tijārīyah, 1968). See the discussion by Ibn Rushd in details of the issues of the Ash‘arite doctrine in ‘*al-Kashf ‘an Manābij al-Adillah*’.
63. Ibn Rushd, ‘*al-Kashf ‘an Manābij al-Adillah*’, p. 65.
64. Ibid., p. 42.
65. Ibid., p. 63.
66. Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, p. 16.
67. Ibid., p. 55.
68. Ibid., p. 52.
69. Muḥammad Ghallāb, knowledge according to Muḥyī al-Dīn bin ‘Arabī in the

Book to Remind of Muḥyī al-Dīn bin ‘Arabī (Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah, 1969), p. 185.

70. Al-Muqarrī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, p. 272.

71. Muḥammad al-Qabalī, *Musāhamah fī Tārīkh al-Tambīd li-Zuhūr Dawlat al-Sa‘dīyīn bi al-Maghrib*, the magazine of the faculty of literature, vols 3 and 4 (1978), p. 16.

72. Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, p. 406.

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 1016–1017.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 1022.

75. We will elaborate on analogy and its mechanisms in the second part of this book.

76. Louis Gardinier and G. Qanawātī, *Falsafat al-Fikr al-Dīnī bayn al-Islām wa al-Masīḥīyah*, translated by Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ and Farīd Jabr ([n.p.]: Dār al-‘Ilm li-l-Malāyīn 1967), pp. 138–140.

77. Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, p. 406.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge, Science and Politics in Arab Culture

Our goal in this book was not to present the historiography of Arab thought. Instead, we wished to trace the 'stages' of the formation of Arab reason within Arab 'scholastic' culture, namely, that which was codified and reconstructed during the Era of Codification and its extensions. Despite this intention, in the course of research we found it necessary to practise a kind of historiography/historicism with regard to Arab culture that engaged in rearranging the relations between its parts and pieces. From this standpoint, the initial conclusion to be drawn from writing this book is that there is an urgent need to rewrite the history of Arab culture. Even if we do not claim to have contributed a new initiative in this context, we believe that we have actually touched upon some of the basic issues which make giving serious thought such an initiative a genuine possibility. We have crossed certain frontiers which may have been crossed for the first time and, to all appearances, these open up promising and productive outcomes. We noted in Chapter Two of this book, that the current 'history' of Arab culture consists largely in repeating the same 'history' written by our ancestors, and that it is still subject to the same concerns and potentials that defined, destined and governed their perceptions, which renders 'current history' replete with 'sects', 'classes' and 'echelons', that is, separate on every level, and in a general manner: the history of differences of opinion and not the formation of that opinion. This kind of cultural history, which we inherited from our ancestors and which can be justified in their epistemological and ideological field of awareness, is the same 'history' that is still being rewritten and reproduced today in one way or another. Often, this process of reproduction is a mere extraction from here and

there, and a stratification of what was 'transmitted' into the classifications divided into sects, classes and categories. This process is dominated by selection, and often completely distorts the 'transferred' epistemological and ideological content. This is how ideas are removed from their context and isolated from their frameworks, driven by excessive desire to confirm 'modernity', 'authenticity' or 'historical precedence' or to emphasise the 'famous figures' and 'material tendencies' along with other modern concerns that often lead to an overzealous drift, a lack of respect for scientific and objective perception.

Therefore, our cultural history needs not only to be rewritten, it needs to be re-read from a new perspective, one that pays heed to every part and every detail through the whole and which emphasises unity through multiplicity and adopts the internal structure not only the external aspects in classification. With this in mind, if the method we followed while studying the components of Arab reason, within Arab-Islamic culture at all levels, has any value or benefit, it is that it emphasises the aspects of interrelation and association and even the aspects of the organic union between sections which are considered in the prevailing perception to be independent and separate from each other. Thus, as soon as we decide to bracket classifications and dominant perceptions and thereby gain as much freedom as possible from the epistemological obstacles and ideological preoccupations that impede the undertaking of scientific research into the Arab-Islamic heritage, including the concern of searching therein to find the 'famous figures', whether in the name of seeking 'authenticity' or under the pretext of seeking 'progressive' (modern) elements – once we make such a determination and begin focusing completely on epistemological concerns, namely seeking to define the foundations of epistemology within Arab culture, we begin to perceive the emergence of a new classification that proposes the re-establishment of relations between sections of our intellectual heritage in such a way that permits us to supersede the differences caused by external factors and leads to the discovery of internal structural differences.

Thus, instead of classifying the sciences and the types of disciplines in Arab culture into the transmitted and the rational sciences or the sciences of religion and linguistics or Arab- and non-Arab sciences, knowing that these classifications are still prevalent and dominant up to the present date, and instead of considering – for instance – *fiqh* (jurisprudence), syntax or rhetoric as separate sciences or disciplines which are independent in terms of subjects and methodologies, and instead of considering the *kalām* (theology) and philosophy as two adjacent and

complementary sciences, or classifying Sufism with the religious sciences and ‘alchemy’ with rational sciences along with mathematics and natural sciences; instead of all these classifications that are based on the external aspects alone, which remind us of the old classification of animals, according to their external features and forms into wild, aquatic and amphibian animals, the monitoring of the epistemological foundation of cognitive production within Arab culture led us to the detection of another classification, one that does not take anything into consideration but the internal structure of knowledge, meaning its mechanisms, its methods and its basic concepts. This classification opens up entirely new, fruitful and deep prospects – as it seems to us – similar to the prospects opened up for biology by the classification of animals into vertebrates and invertebrates. And thus, it was possible to classify the sciences and all kinds of knowledge (cognitive) in Arab-Islamic culture into three groups: the sciences of ‘*al-bayān*’, including syntax, jurisprudence, theology and rhetoric, which are based on a single cognitive system which depends on analogising the unseen (*in absentia*) on the basis of what is in evidence (*in praesentia*) as a methodology for knowledge production; which we termed ‘the Arab religious reasonable’, which is bound by the original deliberative scope of the Arabic language, as a view and a paradigmatic frame of reference. And the knowledge of illumination, including Sufism (mysticism), Shī‘ite thought, Ismā‘īl philosophy, esoteric exegesis of the Qur’ān, illuminationist philosophy, alchemy, healing and a predictive astrometry, magic, talismans and astrology . . . etc., founded on an epistemological system based on the methodology of ‘disclosure and communion [with the divine]’ and ‘sympathy and antipathy’ and on what we termed ‘the irrational of the reason’ – meaning what relates to the mind and not to religion, a point of view that is adopted by Hermetism – as a view and a paradigmatic frame of reference. Finally, the knowledge of demonstration, including logic, mathematics and the various branches of the natural sciences as well as discussions of divine attributes, more like metaphysics, founded by a single cognitive system that is based on the methodology of experimental observation and reasonable deduction, and on what we termed ‘the reasonable of the reason’ – meaning the conceptual knowledge founded on mental premises – as a view and a paradigmatic frame of reference.

Moreover, our focus on the epistemological aspects alone of the internal structure of the Arab culture made us aware of the nature of activities taking place within this culture. Consequently, if we emphasised earlier

how movement in Arab culture is closer to being considered an operation of 'dependence' rather than one of 'transition' (Chapter Two), this was based on the fact that the Arab-Islamic linguistic and religious sciences emerged directly and entirely during the Era of Codification, to which subsequent periods added or contributed little worth mentioning. This is also based on the fact that the 'eternal' Arab cultural stage still contains prominent individuals from throughout the entire history of Arab culture and that the intellectual Arab 'public' is unconcerned with the interval of time that separates them from any such personage. If we have emphasised the stagnation of the Arab *cultural* time through observation of these external aspects, then the new classification with which we adopted the internal structure of knowledge within Arab culture was actually in order to confirm that the movement within this culture is a movement of dependence, a movement of collision and integration between the three epistemological systems establishing it and not a 'transitional' movement (namely a movement of transition from one phase to another with which the later surpasses the former, denying and negating anything it deems unviable and unamenable). This means that from the Era of Codification Arab-Islamic culture continued to redevelop itself. An exception to this was the Andalusian experience, which was ripe, as previously explained, to achieve new frontiers because of the 'disjuncture' it was able to effect with theology and its problematics, the synoptic philosophy and its illuminationist inclinations, as well as with the schools of jurisprudence and their analogies. Except for this exception, which left no trace in Arab culture, this Arab cultural era has in fact remained as it was in the Codification period – if we are to perceive it as a whole through its 'general' aspect, contemplating and ruminating upon itself and undulating in the same 'moment' until it ended in a situation of stagnation . . . and nothing but 'a static relation with tradition' in all fields.

What is the Reason for this Stagnation?

If we meditate on the nature of the historical moment in which Arab-Islamic civilisation rose to assume the role of 'universal' leadership, at the cultural level, we will find it framed by the decline of the Hellenistic Age, that is in respect of the human, philosophical and scientific history of thought and the age of the 'resignation of the reason'. Arab-Islamic civilisation is then seen as being tantamount to the initial phase of the

Renaissance, which took place in Europe at the same time as the end of the Arab civilisational experience in the fifteenth century. In this context, a question is instantly raised: why did Arab-Islamic culture fail to surpass the ‘beginning of the beginning’ to start reaching towards achieving the Renaissance that took place in Europe? In other words, why did this Arab cultural experience fail in what the European experience succeeded, that is, why did it fail to vouchsafe its steady progress?

This question far exceeds the framework of our rational enquiry into the matter. And it has been dealt with in diverse forms and from different areas of interest: for instance, it was addressed by pioneers of the modern Arab Nahḍah (Renaissance) at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth in the form of the question: ‘Why have the Muslims remained behind while others have progressed?’ (such questions were asked, for example, by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Shakīb Arslān). In a similar vein, a contemporary Orientalist, with Marxist inclinations, asked: why is it that the social and economic situations in the Arab world did not develop during the ‘Middle Ages’ into a capitalist system that was capable of attaining to a steady progress similar to the case of Europe? (Maxime Rodinson, author of *Islam and Capitalism*, Arabic translation, Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah). As for us, we address it here in the epistemological framework of our discourse. However, for the question to be fully assimilated in this context, it is necessary to examine its wording before addressing it in the following form: why didn’t the tools of knowledge (concepts, methodologies, prospects) develop in Arab culture, during its renaissance which transpired during the ‘Middle Ages’, to enable it to achieve a sustained intellectual and scientific progress similar to that which occurred in Europe from the fifteenth century onwards?

As long as the question is not yet raised or if posing it has no meaning or significance, unless assessed from within the framework of its comparison to the modern European Renaissance, and as long as this latter has proclaimed since the beginning, and as it still does, its ‘direct’ connection with the ancient Greek renaissance – which we will discuss below – then let us also pose the issue within the same framework – that is, the framework of its comparison with both the Greek and the European experiences. Let us then ask to which factors should the progress of the Greek and modern European experiences be attributed?

If we were to enquire into the Greeks’ introduction of philosophy into human thought, we would find that ‘science’ comes at the top of the list of possible influential elements. Indeed, Greek philosophy as a mental perception of the universe and human beings has been associated since it

was first established and throughout its development with science to a greater extent than anything else, and this association is of almost a causal nature that permits us to say that advances in Greek philosophy were associated with the progress of science, as in a cause-and-effect relationship: thus, if Thales pioneered a philosophical discourse by wondering which element was the one to which all natural particles and various phenomena of the universe refer, reasonably, one will notice that this philosophical discourse (i.e., his examining of the origin of the universe) is the culmination of his scientific observations. He arrived at the conclusion that water is the origin of the universe, because everything could be reasonably reverted back to water: ice, for example, though solid, transforms into water, and air is saturated with water (especially in the coastal regions: Thales lived on a Maltese island); also, plants absorb water and die without it, as is the case for other beings. Thales is not the only one who based his philosophic discourse on the scientific progress that was taking place during his time; in fact, Greek philosophy generated numerous schools of thought, both during his lifetime and subsequently. Each school was characterised by a specific type of 'scientific subject', upon which it established its own philosophical discourse. And the progress that can be monitored during the transition from one school of philosophy to another was founded on or at least parallel to progress in the comprehension of one of the scientific subjects, or that which resulted during the transition from study of a scientific subject of a relatively lesser degree of sophistication to a subject of a higher degree, according to the scale of reasonableness (plausibility). While Thales referred everything back to water, Democritus developed the atomistic or the indivisibility theory of all matter, considering that the entire constituents of the universe are composed of primary particles (that are indivisible); Heraclitus, on the other hand, believed in the perpetual flux and becoming of the universe, a theory that led to tremendous progress in terms of the scientific comprehension of natural phenomena; and then we arrive among the Pythagoreans, who perceived the whole universe as being founded on proportionality and harmony and who therefore argued that numbers, or the numerical unit, were behind the origin of the universe and, they consequently made a gigantic leap in taking the scientific and philosophical to the level of abstraction. Thus, from Thales to Pythagoras, the Greek philosophical schools of thought made great strides towards the establishment of a general theory about the universe, to a large degree of reasonableness (plausibility). In all these steps taken, scientific progress was always the founding impetus, the motive and the incentive. As for the enormous leap

forward made by Plato in regard to the Greek philosophy, it is well known that it would never have been achieved if it had not been for the previous or concurrent progress in mathematics. After all, was it not written on the walls of his academy: 'He who is not an engineer [namely, a mathematician] let him not enter'? And there is a similar relation between the researches of Aristotle in the field of biology (life science) and his accomplishments in logic and metaphysics as well as his general perception of the universe.

And here we find ourselves faced with the pressing question: why did not Greek thought continue its steady progress? Why did Greek philosophy fall, immediately after Aristotle, into a phase of regression and disintegration that ended with the 'resignation of the Greek reason' and its replacement with 'irrationalism' (i.e., gnosticism) instead?

We previously discussed this issue (Chapter Eight) when in the process of analysing the presence of 'resigned reason' in the ancient heritage that was transmitted into Arab-Islamic culture as a legacy of preceding cultures. We identified at that point the view of the French specialist in the trends of thought during the Hellenistic era, the researcher Festugière. He presented the various political, sociological and historical factors that preceded or accompanied the decline of Greek rationalism and its immediate erosion after Aristotle. At that time, rival schools emerged – the school of Scepticism in particular – which made Greek reason appear as though it were 'consuming itself' and which led to 'a particular situation characterised simultaneously by the lack of confidence in reason and the resort to foreign sources of knowledge' (inspiration, gnosis). And as we previously outlined where necessary, Festugière sees that the factor that played a major critical role in the disintegration of Greek rationalism and its degradation must be sought, first and foremost, within this rationalism itself. According to him, the cause is related to an implosion resulting from reliance on a Greek rational in the dialectic of thought and abandoning experience (and the empirical evidence which it provides) which alone is capable of charting the correct course of that dialectic as well as opening up the possibility for the mind to reconsider itself and consequently for it to grow, develop and renew itself. By abandoning experience/experiment and disparaging sensate knowledge, Greek reason made its own viability impossible, upon the completion of the theoretical structure which it worked to establish, as in the case of Aristotle, where what he had established was ruined and what he had built was destroyed.

We believe that this viewpoint is correct in the main since 'science' was the impetus that stimulated Greek philosophy and drove it towards progress and steady development, until its establishment was complete and its edifice

was 'sealed off' with Aristotle, then this science became theoretical, depending solely on mental dialectic. Although the beginnings were always sensory, or inspired by fields of perceptual knowledge and common experience, as soon as the Greek scientist/philosopher formulated the content of sensory experience into an idea or a concept, he began with pure mental processes with which he structured a new 'world', the world of philosophy. And we must link this 'scientific' conduct with the reality of Greek society which was a community of aristocracy and slaves. Experience and direct contact with nature were considered to be the realm of slaves; as for the aristocracy, the tasks for which they were worthy were of a 'higher' sort: contemplative reflection, perception and the production of '*al-bayān*'. This is the reason why Greek science produced philosophy instead of industries or technologies. And, given that philosophy cannot provide the necessary tools for science to develop and improve its operating techniques, as in the sector of industry where it actually facilitated the European experience and still does, then it was normal for Greek theoretical knowledge to lignify, resulting consequently in a total collapse of the philosophical edifice upon which it was founded. And, when science ossifies and the philosophical edifices collapse, nothing remains for the reason but to tender its resignation; and so it did. Thus, the Hellenistic Age represents the era of the 'resigned reason'.

By comparison, the Modern European experience averted, from its inception and especially since Galileo (1564–1642), the mistakes encountered in the Greek world, as it worked on establishing science on the bases of experience/experiment, while founding experiment on industrial tools that are continuously and simultaneously improved along with the progress of science itself. Therefore, science and technology entered a dialectical relationship of endless negotiations. On the other hand, once experimental science emerged with Galileo as a new and regenerated pattern of noesis, European philosophy, which was once theology, entered an entirely new phase with Descartes who re-established it as a science: mathematics and physics. Thus, the progress of philosophy in Europe has been associated with the progress of science/experience as a cause and effect relation. After Descartes, it is worth mentioning English experimental philosophy which was directly associated with science, and the rationality of Leibnitz who was inspired in his monadology (the philosophy of spiritual atoms) by the prevailing conceptions at that time concerning micro-organisms on the one hand and the hypotheses of the calculus of infinite regress or/infinately smaller entities (derivative and differential calculus) in which he made an essential contribution on the other hand. As for Kant, it is well known that his critical philosophy was based entirely on the physics of Newton and its theoretical concepts (absolute time

and absolute space). Then came the contemporary philosophies of positivism along with the scientific philosophies of rationalist inclination, to embody the declared organic correlation between philosophy and science.

And so, the progress of thought, as instrument and content, was and remains provisional to the advancement of science. The question posed here with regard to the Arab-Islamic cultural experience is a double question which addresses accusations regarding 'Arab science'. For on the one hand, the Greek philosophical experience poses the following question: why could not philosophy in the Arab cultural experience endure, propagate and perpetuate rationalism – is it due to the absence of the 'incentive element' for the advancement of philosophy: *science*? And on the other hand, the modern European Renaissance poses the following question: why couldn't the Arab renaissance during the 'Middle Ages' make steady progress, similar to the European Renaissance; is it due to the absence of the 'incentive element' for scientific progress and *experiment*?

Obviously, the value of these questions does not reside in their answers. In fact, they carry their answers within them. The value of such questions lies in the subsequent resulting question or questions that are more capable of enriching research and opening up new horizons of analysis. So, we will bypass these two questions for another which might liberate us from the 'inspiration' of the Greek and the 'domination' of European experience and lead us to the reality of the Arab experience. We then wonder: where was Arab science amid the Arab cultural 'movement' and its fluctuations, and consequently, in the 'progress' of the mind belonging to this culture, the Arab reason?

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We have previously classified the sciences and all kinds of knowledge in Arab culture into three categories: the sciences of explication/indication (*ʿulūm al-bayān*), the sciences of illumination (*ʿulūm al-ʿirfān*), and the sciences of demonstration/proof (*ʿulūm al-burhān*). Therefore, Arab science, in the context of the present question, subsumes all these three types. So let us direct the question to every type individually, for us to discover what new questions might be posed and what results might be drawn.

Concerning the science of *al-bayān*, we previously elucidated in Chapters Five and Six that the Arab mind exercised its first scientific activity ever in these knowledge systems. This happened well before entering into a direct dialogue with the ancient heritage and its sciences, being the science of '*al-ʿirfān*' or the science of *al-burhān*. In fact, Arab reason was actually

composed *through* its establishment of the science of *al-bayān* in which it excelled like no other sciences in the history of human thought. Since we are aware of this fact, we will not hesitate in stating that if philosophy was the miracle of the Greeks, then Arab knowledge was the miracle of the Arabs (Chapter Four) on the one hand, and that if it is admissible to term Islamic civilisation on the basis of one of its products, it would be the ‘civilisation of *fiqh*’ (jurisprudence), and this applies in the same sense by which we qualify Greek civilisation as ‘the civilisation of philosophy’ and modern European civilisation as the ‘the civilisation of science and technology’ (Chapter Five). For the matter is actually related to significant historical achievements that are only appreciated by those who are fully aware of the nature of the (noetic) instruments to be created, of the classifications and specifications that ought to be accomplished, of the relations that ought to be built and of the kind of coherence that should be attained, in the process of creating a single science . . . and how would it be if things were in the case of various sciences at a single period, the Era of Codification?

However, while we remember the great work that has been accomplished by the syntacticians, linguists and scholars of *fiqh*, we must observe, once again, that these fields of knowledges and disciplines reached their apex at the very beginning of their emergence in history, and that the Arab reason which established them could not have contributed anything new to what had already existed during the Era of Codification. Arab reason remained a *prisoner* of the production of this period. And this is basically due to the nature of the subject of these knowledges; the knowledge of *al-bayān*, the knowledge of linguistics and the knowledge of religion. We intentionally use ‘subject’ in its singular not plural form because the subject of these knowledges was single, meaning it was of a unitary nature, that is, a *text*: the linguistic text for syntax and language and the religious text for jurisprudence and theology. Treating a text is different from dealing with natural phenomena such as the natural sciences mathematical entities, which are both fundamentally different in terms of their methodology or their potentials that the subject provides from which to further proceed and to move from one level to another, broader and deeper.

In terms of methodology, we previously explained how the rules set by al-Shāfi‘ī to codify independent opinion (*al-ra’y*) in jurisprudence, was disseminated one way or the other onto the entire knowledge of ‘*al-bayān*’. These rules had no less influence in the composition of the Arab reason than the ‘rules of methodology’ posited by Descartes about the composition of the European reason (Chapter Five). These rules oriented the Arab

mind towards associating parts together horizontally (analogy) and towards associating the same utterance with different types of denotations vertically, as well as associating the same denotation with various kinds of utterances, within the jurisprudential researches, the linguistic and syntactic researches, and dialectical discourses as well. We then asserted that a mind in such situations could only produce through *another* production.

In fact, shortly after the end of the Era of Codification, the process of rumination and the ‘rigid adherence to uncritical imitation of tradition [*al-taqlīd*] in the science of *al-bayān* began. The door to *ijtihād* (independent interpretation) in *fiqh* was shut and people began imitating the imams of the four doctrinal schools (*madhāhib*): ‘And the conflict between those who adhered to it and those who took some of its legal rulings was over their differences in the texts of the *sharī‘ah* and the *uṣūl al-fiqh*, where they debated how each might prove the correctness of the doctrine of his imam . . . and there were arguments about all the matters of the *sharī‘ah* and in every category of *fiqh*, so sometimes the dispute was between al-Shāfi‘ī and Mālik, and Abū Hanīfa agreeing with one of them, and at other times between Mālik and Abū Hanīfa, while al-Shāfi‘ī agreed with one of them, and at times between al-Shāfi‘ī and Abū Hanīfa, where Mālik agreed with one of them. In these debates, the critiques of those imams were exhibited, their differences identified, and the positions of their *ijtihād*, and this was a category of knowledge termed points of difference [*khilāfiyāt*]. And the person who practises this must know the rules employed arrive at the derivation of the legal rulings [*al-aḥkām*] just as a *mujtahid* [jurist exercising independent judgement] should, however the *mujtahid* needs them [the rules] for derivation, whereas the person who argues he needs them to defend these derived matters from being rebutted and refuted by an opponent in argument on the basis of its indications.’ All this led to the creation of a particular ‘knowledge’ for debates and their protocol, the ‘science of the dialectic’ which is the ‘knowledge of the principles among limits and protocol in evidentiary proof which leads to the preservation of an argument or its rebuttal, whether the evidence represents an opinion *fiqh* or other . . . And we should consider that the logical rationale often resembled analogical fallacy and a sophistry [*petitio principii*],¹ then it is indeed because it is based on ‘sympathy and antipathy’ between both conflicting parties, and not based on ‘synergy and correspondence’.² And what happened to jurisprudence also happened to syntax.³ As for theology, it was originally established on ‘sympathy and antipathy’ and al-Ghazālī worked on reinforcing it with logical argumentation for the same purpose, as previously indicated (Chapter Eleven).

Thus, the analogy of *al-bayān*, analogising the unseen (*in absentia*) on the basis of what is in evidence (*in praesentia*) which was basically an instrument for the production of jurisprudential, syntactical and linguistic knowledge in a codified and organised manner, was transmitted and transformed into a ‘dialectical craft’ which was fully preoccupied with ‘defending an opinion or rebutting it’, in the words of Ibn Khaldūn, and according to al-Fārābī it is a craft ‘aiming at misleading, deceiving, confusing and deluding so that which is wrong is conceived of as being right, and what is right as being wrong’.⁴ In other words, the issue of what had been previously termed ‘the Arab-Islamic rationalism’, the composition, methodology and accomplishments, of which we presented in Chapters Five and Six, faced the same fate as Greek rationalism; for the Arab reason of *al-bayān* also seemed, immediately after the Era of Codification, to be as though it were ‘consuming itself’. This consequently led, here in Arab culture as well, to a ‘situation characterised simultaneously by lack of trust in the reason and resort to foreign sources of knowledge’. And if this situation had characterised certain sectors within Arab-Islamic culture since the beginning of the Era of Codification when the Hermetic ‘resigned mind’, which transmitted along with it the ancient heritage, occupied a central position (see Chapter Eight) for the infiltration of gnosticism into the locus of the Arab *bayān* through the so-called ‘Sunni Sufism’ was tantamount to a declaration that the Arab reason of ‘*al-bayān*’ will wind up tendering its resignation. And Hārith al-Muḥāsibī was, as we have seen (Chapter Eleven), the first to make this pronouncement, since he had ‘broken’ with al-Shāfi‘ī and Ibn Ḥanbal and the theologians and elected to choose Sufism. Despite the strong reaction against him within the circle of *al-bayān*, as we noticed previously, this issue did not prevent the development and the broadening of the path he had opened. Later, the process of seeking the ‘Sunni legitimisation’ of Sufism began through declaring the conjunction between the ‘manifest’ (*al-ẓāhir*) and the ‘esoteric’ (*al-bāṭin*) and between ‘reality’ (*al-haqīqah*) and ‘the *sharī‘ah*’, and this legitimacy was drawn and fixed by al-Ghazālī who consecrated and strengthened the status of the ‘resigned mind’ in the circle of ‘*al-bayān*’, a status which was characterised – as previously mentioned – by the lack of trust in reason and resort to foreign sources of knowledge, which are here the Sufi ‘*irfān*’.

The question is now the following: why did the Arab reason of ‘*al-bayān*’ end up in this situation? Surely the socio-political and historical factors had their role in consecrating and reinforcing this status, just as the occupation of the Hermetic ‘resigned reason’ of some essential posi-

tions within Arab culture since the Era of Codification threatened the existence of the Arab reason of ‘*al-bayān*’ at every moment. These external factors must be fully considered, of course, yet we must however search *within* the Arab reason of ‘*al-bayān*’ for the causes of its defeat in the battle against the illuminationism of ‘*al-irfān*’ on the one hand, and the reasons behind its resort to ‘stagnation in the uncritical imitation of tradition [*al-taqlīd*]’ in its remaining existence, on the other.

As seen previously, Festugière explained the situation of the ‘resigned reason’ to which the Greek mind had succumbed for the reason that this latter disparaged experience/experiment and considered itself above it. Might what happened to the Arab reason of *al-bayān* be explained and attributed to the same cause: obliviousness towards experience/experiment?

In fact, if it is admissible to ‘accuse’ the Greek reason of ‘*al-burhān*’ of being aristocratic – ‘a master’ – denigrating perceptual knowledge and disdaining experience, then it is impossible to charge the Arab reason of ‘*al-bayān*’ with the same accusation because the subject with which the Greek mind dealt – meaning the universe and its phenomena – is truly amenable to experiment and consequently provides the potentials for limitless progress, especially if the search takes an analytical, empirical path – as it is entirely impossible to arrive at the ‘final’ law among the laws of nature (and this was proven by the European experience where the reason is in continuous evolution through resort to experience/experiment and operating according to the results of such), the subject of the Arab reason of *al-bayān*, by contrast, is not amenable, by its nature, to experience/experiment in this sense. In fact, this is its primary and most dangerous weak point.

The subject with which the Arab reason of *al-bayān* dealt and continues to deal is the subject through which it developed and was formed and that is the subject of the texts (*al-nuṣūṣ*). Dealing with texts is inherently different from dealing with nature and its phenomena because if the human mind finds, as we mentioned previously, in the realm of nature possibilities for a limitless perpetual progress, and moreover, what consequently permits it to create new cultural *eras* (i.e.,) times whenever it is able to effect a ‘rupture’ from its own concepts and antecedent theoretical devices, then whatever might be extracted and derived from the rules governing the linguistic text or from legislation drawn from the religious text would be very limited. Therefore, there would certainly come a time when the search would have exhausted all potential for progress and where the only remaining capacity for work would become limited to further review and reorganisation. This is what actually happened in the field of Arab-Islamic

sciences and knowledge, where everything in it had already ended at the stage of *inception*, which simultaneously constituted a stage of production, review, categorisation and organisation. And as we previously observed (in Chapter Two) we might inquire again: what was left for the syntacticians after the book of Sībawayh and for the linguists after the book *al-ʿAyn* by al-Khalīl and for the scholars of the *uṣūl* after the *Risālah* of al-Shāfiʿī? Surely there were some branch, derivative works that were not devoid of innovations. However, it is also equally certain that interest had shifted – after the depletion of the possibilities for subject matter (i.e., the texts) – to theorisation in ‘the methods of theorisation’ (i.e., methodologies) and ‘the etiquette’ of debate and argumentation, and so on. Yet all this used to transpire inside a circle that was closed forever; and the movement was thus necessarily circular – consecrating repetition and monotony and consenting what was produced, so time was then a cyclic and repetitive time: a *dead* time, or if it were alive, then semi-moribund.

This, however, was only one side of the issue. There is something more influential and of a deeper impact in the existence of the Arab reason of ‘*al-bayān*’. This is because, in fact, the issue here is not only related to the limitations of the potentials that are provided by the texts, but also to the outcome of dealing with the texts alone which is of a greater importance than knowing the aim behind this particular treatment. The Orientalist Hamilton Gibb noted a unique phenomenon that distinguishes the Arab literature, according to him, from other works of literature. He believes that ‘while the development of the studies of language scientifically occurred relatively late’ in these non-Arab literatures, in a way that ‘the technical methods of the rules of syntax and linguistic analyses did not have any considerable influence over the types and characteristics of their literature’, in comparison, what happened in the Arab literature was quite the contrary: ‘and, whether the outcome of this was positive or negative, the subsequent developments in Arabic literature were under the influence of the linguistic studies accomplished during the Era of Codification’⁵ If we agree with this observation concerning the relation between Arabic language and Arabic literature, which is an imposing observation as it reflects a historical fact, and if we notice on the other hand that what occurred to the language had happened simultaneously in all fields where the Arab reason of *al-bayān* was in operation (*fiqh*, theology, *tafsīr* [Qurʾānic exegesis], *ḥadīth*, *balāghah* [eloquence/rhetoric]) it would be admissible to say, according to Gibb, that if the ‘normative situation’ required for the codification of the language connotes the apex of the development of its literature, then it would also be ‘normal’ for the codification of the

reason to constitute a result of the development of its products. However, what transpired in the Arab cultural experience was quite the opposite: scientific work in Arab-Islamic civilisation began by ‘legitimising the legitimiser’ (*al-tashrī‘ li-l-musharri‘*), by delimiting and defining the sphere of movement of the Arab reason of *al-bayān* and its mode of operation. This was in language and syntax and *through* them, as well as by means of *fiqh* and theology and through their means. Therefore, it was not possible for the Arab reason of *al-bayān* to progress and develop more than it had already done. The great achievements that it accomplished in the fields of language and *fiqh* were not merely principles for language and legislation whereby they ought to be constrained, but these also consisted of fetters for the mind, for circumscribing it in a framework, meaning fixing the mechanisms of its activity within a particular framework that must be respected. And when the construction of language and legislation was complete, building in the field of ‘legitimising the legitimiser’ (*al-tashrī‘ li-l-musharri‘*) was also complete, and thus the Arab reason of *al-bayān* became imprisoned inside this structure that had encircled yet enclosed itself, so there was no exit or escape from stagnation or ‘imitation’.

It was neither possible nor normal for the science of *al-bayān* to secure Arab thought and, consequently, Arab culture as a whole, a steady progress. As for the science of *al-‘irfān* it represents the ‘resigned reason’ itself. Furthermore, it would be contradictory to seek in it the extent of what it might have provided in terms of causes for development or perpetual renaissance since the utilisation of methodologies and the purposes of the science of *al-‘irfān* were for the hereafter, and not for the sake of the temporal life of the world. As for the associated mundane ‘occult knowledge’ such as alchemy, astrology, astronomy, pseudo-medicine, and so forth, these emanated from a magical perception of the world based on the belief in the potential of ‘transforming essences and transcending the laws of nature’ (i.e., the denial of the natural causation); and therefore, they were *not* sciences, and neither could they have accomplished what science is required to achieve. Is it possible to achieve a renaissance through magic? Finally, we are left with the science of *al-burbān*, which is precisely what is intended here. In fact, the question we previously raised (where does ‘Arab science’ fall in the Arab cultural dynamic?) was basically directed towards the science of *al-burbān*. However, since the science of *al-bayān* had played a broader role in Arab culture, and since it had accomplished significant achievements in its own domain, it was necessary to discuss its potentials in regard to the issue that concerns us here, as it was necessary to mention the capabilities of the science of *al-‘irfān* in order to be able

to discuss the potentials of the science of *al-burhān* while being aware of the whole picture.

Here we must distinguish in the science of *al-burhān* between two types of scientific practices: a theoretical practice falling entirely within the Aristotelian matrix and operating according to its orientations, and a practical and theoretical practice operating, to a certain degree of liberation, outside of it. Thus, mathematics and physics as practised by al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Bājjah, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd were all framed, although to different degrees, within the entire Aristotelian matrix. Since this order had been perfected and closed with its founder and subsequently transformed into a general theory of the universe, the human being and God – namely to a metaphysical order, it was not possible for the knowledge employed within it to progress or rejuvenate except by shattering this system. In this context, Aristotelian knowledge lost its independence within this order and became an element governed by it where its function was predetermined forever. Shattering the Aristotelian order or surpassing it was not possible until after acknowledging it, working from within and activating its internal contradictions such as what transpired in Europe after the twelfth century CE when the philosophy of Ibn Rushd was transferred into it and created a revolutionary current of thought that turned the wheel of evolution in a manner enabling science, afterwards, to play a historical role in the modern European Renaissance.

As for Arab culture, the Aristotelian order had not come to be fully known in the same form in which it was known in Christian Europe, because the religious referential authority in Arab culture had no need for it, neither in terms of its logic nor in terms of its knowledge, unlike the case of the Christian referential authority: the Church. This is clear because the Islamic religious referential authority (i.e., as embodied by the *fuqahā'*) had its own *reason* of *al-bayān* which had no need for anything other than its own 'logic' and sciences. Even more than that, or perhaps *because* of that, when the knowledge of this order was translated into Arabic, it was not transmitted for the sake of itself, nor was it transferred for the purpose of restructuring Islamic religious thought, but for the purpose of utilising it – entirely or partially – in the struggle against the illuminationism of *al-irfān* as we previously indicated (Chapter Ten) on the one hand, whereas we must confirm, on the other, that Arab culture did not reproduce the Aristotelian order entirely and purely, free from any impurity of the 'resigned reason' and its Hermetic tendencies, until the period of Ibn Rushd, particularly and simultaneously when the reconciliation between *al-bayān* and *al-irfān* was achieved and the need for *al-burhān* no longer existed, espe-

cially that its method was employed by the later scholars of theology using what *al-bayān* needed: the form (i.e., the logical syllogism) in addition to some metaphysical concepts (such as the concepts of the ‘necessary’ and the ‘possible’, etc.).

This was with regard to the science of the *burhān* within the Aristotelian order. As for the experimental scientific practice which occurred outside this system, or at least without being subject to its hegemony as a closed order, it was genuine scientific practice, and – in many cases – it evidenced a considerable degree of maturity and progress. We must record, here, some of the aspects of this genuine Arab scientific progress, which was not within the scope of our interest in the previous chapters for reasons which we will later elucidate. There is no doubt about commending the progress achieved by Arab algebra from Khawārizmī to the Moroccan al-Samaw’ali who conceived and practised the methodology of the ‘analysis and synthesis’ in mathematics in a highly developed fashion.⁶ We must pay tribute to Ibn Haytham who also practised scientific extrapolation and empirical ‘supposition’ in an entirely practical method, in addition to his own theories on optics, which preoccupied the scientists of optics in Europe for a long time. Moreover, we should also note the scientific accomplishments in the field of astronomy achieved by al-Bayrūnī, al-Battānī and al-Baṭrūjī and others. However, while we record this maturity and progress known to true scientific practice among all these Arab scientists, which is a historical fact known to all, we must note on the other hand – and this is the reason why we remained silent throughout all of the phases we mentioned up to this stage of our research – that Arab science, in this sense, remained outside the theatre of struggle in Arab culture, and, consequently, it did not enter into any relation with any of the conflicting sides within it – either with religion nor with philosophy. Thus, the struggle within Arab culture was not between *mythos* and *logos* (between the myth on the one hand and science and philosophy on the other), as was the case in Greek culture, nor was it between science and the Church as in the case of the modern European experience. Rather, the struggle within Arab thought, as indicated in the previous chapters, was between two cognitive systems, each of which underpinned a particular ideology: the system of *al-bayān* and the Sunni ideology on the one hand, and the system of illumination, *al-irfān*, and Shī‘ite ideology (especially *Isma‘īli*), on the other. Moreover, when the system of demonstration of *al-burhān* entered as a third party, it was to accomplish a definite role in that struggle (the dream of *al-Ma‘mūn*) and immediately became directed and controlled by this struggle. As for science, in the genuine sense of the word, it remained

marginalised *vis-à-vis* the conflicting intellectual and ideological systems, and consequently there was no opportunity for it to contribute in the formation of Arab reason as a whole.

And what has a particular significance in this regard is that the Arab-Islamic civilisation is devoid of such condemnations of and trials against scientists, astronomers and physicists in ancient Greece as in modern Europe, as a result of their hypotheses in science. Suffice it to recollect that to which Kepler (1571–1630) and his work were subject such as having his works put under seal and the interdiction imposed by contemporary theologians because of his support for the Copernican theory in astronomy based on the heliocentric belief in the fixed position of the sun and the rotation of the earth around it, contrary to prevailing beliefs. We must also note the trials and tribulations of Galileo (1564–1642) due to his insistence that the earth rotates around the sun and his being constrained by the Inquisition to sign a document wherein he vowed not to discuss this theory. After being forced to sign, in order to save his life, he kicked the earth with his foot and uttered his famous saying: ‘And still it rotates.’ As for Arab-Islamic civilisation, despite the fact that the concept of the spherical shape of the earth and its rotation was commonplace just as other similar scientific ideas, such did not instigate any reactions either by *fuqahā* or by governors. The reason for that is clear because these ideas appeared on the margins of the struggle, as the conflict within the Arab-Islamic culture was not aimed at demolishing a perception of the universe to establish another, as was the case in Europe, where the two conflicting parties were the scientists on the one hand and the Church on the other; but rather, the conflict within Arab culture was a strictly ideological and political struggle.

Therefore, in the Arab cultural experience we ought to put politics in the place of science in both Greek and modern European experience. In other words, the role played by science in Greece and in modern Europe concerning the accountability of the philosophical thought (and religious) as well as opposing it, dismantling its structures and restructuring them, and so forth, were all created by *politics* in the Arab-Islamic culture. And, as elucidated in previous chapters, the critical moments in the evolution of Arab-Islamic thought were not limited by science, but were, rather, restricted by *politics*.

Any analysis of Arab-Islamic thought, whether from a structural perspective or a historical one, will remain incomplete and its results misleading if it were not to take into account the role of politics in the orientation of this thought and the determination of its course and curves. If the

historians of thought in their various doctrinal inclinations and methodological tendencies admit, explicitly or implicitly, a certain kind of independence of thought from the constraints of reality, which is a *relative* independence in all cases, the relativity of this independence, from the socio-political and economic reality in particular, has to be determined not only according to the position of this thought in the echelon of abstraction (political thought, religious thought, philosophical thought . . .) but also in light of the nature of the relation between the state and the dominant ideology within a community. Thus, just as it would be a major error to analyse intellectual production in the contemporary community, whether socialist or ‘underdeveloped’, without taking into full consideration the presence of the state and its direct or indirect hegemony, so is the case in regard to Arab-Islamic thought during the Middle Ages. This is because Islam, the real and historic Islam, was simultaneously a religion and a state. Further, since the ‘thought’, which was involved in the general ideological conflict, was a *religious* thought or at least in a direct relation with religion, it was also and for this reason subject to a direct relation with politics.

The issue does not end here; in fact the relationship between thought and politics in the ‘state of Islam’ was not bound and determined by contemporary politics alone, as is the case in the modern societies. Rather, it was also determined by the politics of the *past*. That is because ‘current’ politics, whether according to the state or the opposition, was a continuity of the politics of the ‘past’, with respect to two aspects: on the one hand, with regard to the state, the ‘other’ was still the same in its ideology and political aims, it had not changed since it was considered to be the ‘other’ after the victory of Mu‘āwiyah and the emergence of the Umayyad dynasty, and consequently the general politics of the Sunni state continued to be determined – as we have seen – through the relation with that ‘other’. On the other hand, the politics of the past not only constituted incidents, but also ‘precedents’ and fundamental principles (*uṣūl*), and consequently it was considered a cognitive material for culture, inherited by the successor from the ancestor. Both the state and the opposition were alike in this regard, as each of them sought to contain the past in order to utilise it in its own interest, and hence competition over the past was one of the aspects of the manifestations of the conflict over the present and the future.

If previous chapters have sufficiently emphasised the essential roles played by politics in orienting Arab-Islamic thought ever since it became ‘scholastic’ thought, during the Era of Codification, we find the same phenomena

existing even more conspicuously *before* the Era of Codification. And this is because right after the incident of ‘arbitration’ which ended the war between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah, discussion began of *politics by means of religion*. Political positions, which are tangential by nature, seek their public support from religion, and these were the first theoretical steps that established what would later be called *‘ilm al-kalām* (theology). Thus, theology in its historical reality was not a mere discourse on the religious creed, but rather, it was *political practice in religion*. And when the opposition tended, followed by the state, towards the ancient heritage, their mutual purpose was to employ it in the same practice: the practice of politics in religion which broadened to become political practice in philosophy as well. As for the practice of science, it remained on the margins without commotion, being practiced individually and sporadically.

Arab science, the science of al-Khawārizmī, al-Bayrūnī, Ibn al-Haytham and Ibn al-Nafīs and others, remained outside the theatre of movement of Arab culture, so it did not participate in enriching Arab reason or in renovating its patterns, or examining its antecedents and precedents, and so Arab cultural time remained unchanged, extending over the selfsame expanse from the Era of Codification up to the time of Ibn Khaldūn, when it fell into stagnation and its waves froze from Ibn Khaldūn up to the modern Arab ‘renaissance’ which has yet to be achieved.

Therefore, the questions we must ask are: Why have Muslims lagged behind when others have progressed?’ Why did not Arab social and economic circumstances develop, during the Middle Ages, into a capitalist system, despite the fact that these situations experienced a vast and highly developed mercantile economy? Or why could not the Arab renaissance find its way towards a steady progress during the ‘Middle Ages’? These questions will remain incomplete and with limited prospects if not asked at the epistemological level as well, if not directly asked to Arab reason itself. This is because ‘Muslims’ began to fall behind when their reason first began to fall into a state of resignation, when they began to seek the religious legitimacy of this resignation, while the Europeans started to progress when their reason began to awaken and question itself. As for capitalism, it is the daughter of rationality.

Some of the reasons for the ‘insistence’ of the Arab reason on submitting its resignation are due to the ‘ancient heritage’ preceding Islam, while others are due to the pure ‘Islamic heritage’. As we elucidated in previous chapters, the Arabs inherited a ‘stratigraphic’ amalgam of opinions and beliefs, as well as philosophies covered by a thick crust of productions of

the Hermetic 'resigned reason', so their historic and scientific role was represented by traversing this crust to the 'minerals' of science and reason, to the Greek rationale which represented the historical quintessence of the evolution of human reason and its knowledge of its time. They did so partially – and *only* partially – because of one of the givens of the pure 'Islamic cultural legacy' itself. This was the crisis of the 'Imamate and politics' which was a chronic structural crisis with cultural, social and ethnic roots which remained throughout Arab-Islamic history nurturing an ideological conflict, where one of the two parties had adopted the products of the Hermetic 'resigned reason', which invested these products with a socio-political or even historical function. Hence, one of the serious paradoxes in the experience of Arab-Islamic civilisation is the paradox represented by the contradiction between ideological content and epistemological basis in the ideology of both conflicting parties: the Shi'ite opposition and the Sunni caliphal state.

While the Shi'ite opposition was able to attract, throughout Arab-Muslim history, the persecuted, miserable and suppressed social groups, and to adopt their socio-political cause, which gave it a revolutionary and progressive aspect, such opposition endeavoured to employ the products of the 'resigned reason' as an epistemological basis for its ideology; and it also derived directly from these its religious and political philosophy. From this standpoint stemmed the contradiction from which it suffered throughout its history, a history replete with struggles and revolutions: the contradiction between the progressive revolutionary character of the goals and the irrational character of the ideology and its epistemological basis. This transpired while the opposing state adopted an entirely opposite position: it was conservative at the level of the social aims, but 'revolutionary' (i.e., rational) in most cases at the level of ideology – meaning in what established it in terms of knowledge. When some historical factors interfered with the experience of Arab-Islamic civilisation as a whole, meaning the Crusades and the attacks of the Spanish on Andalusia and the Tatar invasion of the East, this contradiction had to end in a general regression: the regression of the progressive and revolutionary character of the Shi'ite opposition goals and the exacerbation of the irrational character of the cognitive basis in its religious ideology on the one hand, and the regression of the rational character of the ideology of the state/opposition, and the exacerbation of the conservative character of its social aims on the other hand. The end result was the dissemination of irrational perception at the cognitive and ideological level, and the consecration of backwards, feudal features on the social level. Thus, the coherence and integration

between epistemological basis and ideological content was established, for the first time, in the experience of Arab-Islamic civilisation, and this occurred in the second phase of its evolution, the 'Age of Decline'.

And 'reasons for the underdevelopment and regression of Muslims', and the 'reasons for the progress of others' are due precisely to the factors of the European Renaissance, which possesses two types of 'heritage': the Greek-Christian heritage on the one hand, and the philosophical and scientific Arab heritage on the other. With regard to the first, it is represented particularly in two elements: the struggle of the Church against gnosticism (the resigned reason) continuously throughout the first four centuries of the emergence of Christianity, and as a result it was totally ousted from its confines. The Church relied, in this struggle against gnosticism as well as in its struggle against other [heretical] innovations (*bid'ah*) and in the theological discussions concerning the Christian creed itself, upon the Greek 'rational of the reason' and its logical premises, which kept the 'universal reason' constantly present in Christian thought. Subsequently, the separation between religion and politics, or in other words, the position of the state as being 'neutral' *vis-à-vis* the problematic of thought which was the prerogative of the Church, was that which directed the struggle, not against the state nor with it, but against the Church alone. It was not a struggle for the 'Imamate and politics' but it was for the sake of 'the truth' – the religious as well as the universal. As for the second, meaning the Arab heritage that was transmitted to Europe and helped to establish its Renaissance, it was also represented by two elements: the philosophy of Ibn Rushd, which not only introduced Europe to the genuine Aristotle, but which also carried with it the theory of Ibn Rushd on the separation between religion and philosophy on the basis that each represents an independent structure founded on its own fundamentals (*uṣūl*) and principles, all of which instigated there – in Europe – a fertile and a serious conflict between philosophy and the Church, between science and theology, so the result was ultimately the triumph of reason and the independence of science. As for the second element, meaning Arab science, it came to underpin this conflict in a manner that would facilitate its steady progress on the way towards the Renaissance. And, here, we must emphasise the scientific works of two Arab scientists who had the greatest influence on the scientific Renaissance of Europe.

The first was al-Ḥasan bin al-Haytham (died AH 430, known in Europe as Alhazen, whose theories in the science of optics (i.e., vision and optics) were considered the basics upon which Galileo and previous scientists founded what Europe witnessed of the revolution in experimental science,

and in particular in the science of optics. Ibn al-Haytham wished to explain the method by which we are able to see in a way that surpassed the prevailing conflict among contradictory Greek theories on this issue, whose proponents were divided into two camps: one believing that a ray is launched from the oculi towards things and, thus, vision occurs; and another obscure school believing in the dispersion of images of visible things and their transmission to the eye. Ibn al-Haytham wished to settle this conflict by examining both doctrinal schools in a critical and scientific manner: ‘and since this was the case, and with the ambiguousness of the reality of this meaning alongside the continuous conflicts between the scientists of optics who base their infinite research on demonstration, while the method of eyesight was still uncertain, we thought of paying particular attention to this regard and employing utmost care in heeding it. We will be serious in our research of its truth, and will begin exploring its principles and premises, and start exploring the existents and perusing the status of visible things as well as distinguishing the properties of particles and extrapolating what relates to vision in the seeing process and what is just a mere unchangeable steadiness, and an affirmative manifest that is not affected by emotional factors. Afterwards, we will extend our search and reach different gradual orderly dimensions while selecting premises and maintaining reservations about the results, and in the process of using all given data, we will aim at following the courses of justice and not of desires, for our sole purpose of these distinctions and critiques is to seek the truth not follow whims’.⁷

Renewed respect for principles and premises, extrapolating, examining, distinguishing the properties of atoms, moving gradually in research and criteria, while criticising the premises and maintaining reservations about results, seeking the truth and avoiding intransigence in views – these were the foundations upon which modern science developed in Europe after it failed to find any ‘midwife’ to deliver it in the experience of Arab civilisation, seeing that it was the result of a scientific marriage between *al-burhān* and *al-bayān* in the mind of Ibn al-Haytham. It must be noted that ingenious Arab scientists and philosophers relied in their creativity on the kind of thinking that combines the methodology of *al-burhān* (the syllogism of *al-bayān* and *al-burhān*) and the methodology of *al-bayān* and in particular ‘testing and division’ (*al-sabr wa al-taqṣīm*), namely the analytical level of extrapolation in the analogy of *fiqh*. We can see this in the scientific discourse of Ibn al-Haytham and Ibn al-Nafīs (the discoverer of blood circulation) and Ibn Baṣṣāl (founder of empirical astronomy in Andalusia) and Ibn Khaldūn as well as other ingenious Arab scholars who employed

the concepts of *al-bayān* (i.e., the concepts set by the ‘*ulamā*’ of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* and their particular terminologies) in their researches.

The views of Ibn al-Haytham or his scientific methodology did not find a ‘midwife’ in Arab culture, so they had no repercussions or any influence in the composition of Arab reason, although it may have had some significance in European culture. In order to realise the extent of ‘strangeness’ of the views of Ibn al-Haytham and his scientific methodology within Arab culture, it is sufficient to compare the lack of any repercussion from what he created (such as constructive scientific and systematic scepticism), and the broad and sweeping repercussions resulting from the destructive and metaphysical ‘scepticism’ of al-Ghazālī. Ibn al-Haytham says: ‘Since my youth, I was full of people’s various beliefs and the adherence of every group of them to their opinion, so I was sceptical of all of them, and I was certain that truth is only *one*,’ thus, the difference between scholars is not due to the multiplicity of the truth but to their different methods of seeking it. And Ibn al-Haytham wonders if there was a way for the truth, through which ‘suspicion unravels itself and scepticism unfolds?’ and he answers saying: ‘so I noticed that I could not reach the truth except through opinions having their elements [i.e., materials] the sensory things and their image the reasonable things, so I could not find this except in the determinations of Aristotle such as the knowledge of logic, natural science, and theology which is the essence of philosophy and its nature.’ For he, namely Aristotle, ‘judged fundamentals perfectly, through which the path of the truth can be followed, where its nature and essence can be realised and where its core and soul are found’ (the thesis of Ibn al-Haytham narrated by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah).

This was written by Ibn al-Haytham not less than three quarters of a century before al-Ghazālī would write *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*. Ibn al-Haytham found the path towards the truth in science: in the ‘science of logic and natural science; al-Ghazālī found it in Hermetic mysticism as previously indicated; al-Ghazālī suppressed the knowledge of Ibn al-Haytham and his spirit of rational criticism before and after it had existed. He suppressed him before he existed through his teachers, those who consecrated the ‘resigned reason’ from al-Muhāsibī to Ibn Sīnā, and he suppressed him after he existed through his books and followers. Ibn al-Haytham was an element alien to Arab culture, so he did not have any kind of influence: as for al-Ghazālī, and his teachers and followers, they were adopted strongly and insistently throughout its history, and therefore they stood in our way and imposed themselves over the past chapters which we allocated for the components of Arab reason. As for Ibn al-Haytham and his

scientific methodology, we had to mention him through the milieu in which he arose to prominence, the milieu of the European Renaissance.

The second scientific figure whose influence on the European Renaissance must be emphasised, and who could not have been included in the context of our previous presentation of the components of Arab reason because he was not born among their realities and circumstances, just as in the case of Ibn al-Haytham, is the prominent figure of Andalusian astronomy, the famous Nūr al-Dīn Abū Ishāq Al-Baṭrūjī, who died in AH 601, known in Europe as Pétagius. Al-Baṭrūjī was one of the scholars of the school of Ibn Māja, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd. This school had criticised the Ptolemaic system of astronomy then prevalent and which underpinned, cosmologically, the metaphysics of emanation (*al-fayḍ*) consecrated by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. The Andalusian school of Aristotelian inclination desired to establish an astronomical system in line with the cosmological views of Aristotle. And Al-Baṭrūjī, student of Ibn Rushd, was able to establish a new astronomical system in apposition to the system of Ptolemy, which filled in the gaps of his system and dispensed with its complexities, in line with the knowledge of Aristotle. This new astronomical system was transmitted to Europe, where it continued attracting followers and partisans and struggled with the system of Ptolemy until almost the sixteenth century. Just as the researches of Ibn al-Haytham were the basics of optical physics in modern Europe, the astronomical views of Al-Baṭrūjī were present in the revolution that astronomy witnessed in Europe with Copernicus and Kepler. Thus, we must reiterate that the modern European Renaissance emerged as a direct extension of the Arab renaissance. The reason for this lies in the fact that what was inherent in this one found its way to be achieved in the other. As for the reasons for the non-development of Arab civilisation on the course that would render it capable of achieving what was latent and inherent in it, we have already presented them in the previous pages. They remain theoretical reasons, meaning that they are hypothetical, similar to all reasons explaining historical incidents and the repercussions of their movements. As for the real causes, they are a combination of the general historical existence of the civilisation of humankind as a whole, where particulars are associated with universals and results interfere with premises.

Furthermore, let us not diverge too far from our subject but let us conclude by recalling that we have completed our study of the components of Arab reason within Arab culture by distinguishing three cognitive-epistemological systems, each one of them establishing its own mechanism in the production of knowledge, along with the particular

associated concepts, and the resulting views for each. The next step before us is the analysis of these three cognitive systems and the examination of their mechanisms, concepts and views, and their interrelation, which forms the internal structure of Arab reason as it was formed during the Era of Codification and as it continues and remains to date, and this is the subject of the second volume of this book.

Notes

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3. *‘Al-Ighrāb fī Jadal al-A‘rāb’ (The Obscure in the Debate of the Bedouin)*, by Ibn al-Anbārī, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut 1971).
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7. Al-Ḥasan Ibn al-Haytham, *‘Buḥūthihī wa Kushūfihī al-Baṣarīah’* (his researches and discoveries on optics), composed by Muṣṭafā Naẓīf, Tura: Egypt, 1942, p. 35).

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