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**RELIGION AND MODERNITY
IN THE THOUGHT OF MUṢṬAFĀ ṢABRĪ:
A COMPARATIVE APPROACH**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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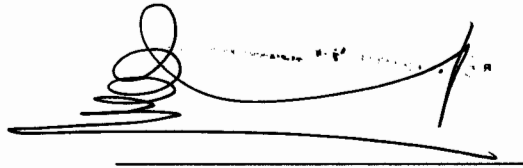
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Abstract

This study is an attempt to explore *Shaykh al-Islām* Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī's understanding of the relation between religion and modernity. His understanding is important because it stems from an authentic *Kalāmī* perspective that represents classical Islamic thinking from which Muslim study of other religions sprang and became a predecessor of comparative religion in the West.

Ṣabrī's construction of the perception of modernity is examined in the first part of this thesis. It is argued that he identifies five key components that constitute the core of modernity, namely: materialism, positivism, scepticism, science and Darwinism. Together these intellectual trends form a context in which modern study of religion emerges. The second part examines how Ṣabrī links these core components of modernity with the method by which religion is approached, understood and studied. Furthermore, it investigates how Ṣabrī assesses these modern ways and how he compares them with the method of *Kalām*. Discussion in this part is organized around following themes: the changing paradigms of modern times, the problem of defining religion, the importance of the study of religion, religion and reason, and religion and science. In the last part an attempt is made to analyse how this particular context of modernity and the crisis of methodology impact on central principles in religion such as: the existence of God, rational possibility of prophethood and miracles, and resurrection. Moreover, it looks into how they relate to certain modern issues such as separation of religion and politics, and responses to some ways of interpreting Muslims' decline in the modern times.

Finally, it is argued that Ṣabrī's contribution, which is inspired by classical *Kalām*, is not only significant as a modern Islamic approach to the study of religion, but also as a representative of non-Western study in the field that has been for so long dominated by Western approaches.

ملخص البحث

الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بإسلام آباد

كلية الدراسات الإسلامية (أصول الدين) - قسم مقارنة الأديان

عنوان البحث: الدين والحداثة في فكر مصطفى صبري .. دراسة في إطار علم الدين المقارن

بحث تكميلي مقدم لنيل درجة الدكتوراه في مقارنة الأديان

إعداد: فاروق ترزيتش

إشراف: الأستاذ الدكتور عبد الخالق قاضي

(صفر 1429هـ - فبراير 2008م)

سعى هذا البحث سعياً حثيثاً نحو استكشاف فهم شيخ الإسلام مصطفى صبري للعلاقة بين الدين والحداثة، واضعاً في اعتباره أن فهمه لهذه العلاقة يمثل أهمية بحثية حرة بالنظر؛ لأنه ينبعث من الوجهة الكلامية التي تمثل جانباً أساسياً وراقياً من الفكر الإسلامي الأصيل، وهو الجانب الذي نشأ في مجاله علم الملل والنحل؛ فكان مقدمة لعلم الدين المقارن في الغرب.

ولقد اهتم الباب الأول من البحث بدراسة بناء مفهوم الحداثة عند الشيخ صبري؛ فبين أنه تكلم عن خمسة عناصر أساسية للحداثة هي: المادية، والوضعية، والعلم، والريبية، والداروينية. وهذه الاتجاهات الفكرية تشكل السياق الذي نشأت فيه الدراسة الحديثة للدين.

وأما الباب الثاني؛ فدرس كيفية ربط شيخ الإسلام بين هذه العناصر الأساسية للحداثة والمنهج الذي دُرِسَ به الدين وفُهِمَ. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك عمل على بيان تقييم شيخ الإسلام للمنهج الجديد، ومقارنته بمنهج علم الكلام القديم. ولقد دارت المناقشة في هذا الباب حول الموضوعات الآتية: المفاهيم المتغيرة في العصر الحديث، ومشكلة تعريف الدين، وأهمية دراسته، والدين والعقل، والدين والعلم.

وقد عُنيَ الباب الأخير بتحليل آثار هذا السياق الخاص بالحداثة وأزمة المنهج في المبادئ المركزية في الدين، مثل: وجوب وجود الله، والإمكان العقلي للنسبة والمعجزة والبعث. وفي القضايا الحديثة أيضاً، مثل: قضية فصل الدين عن السياسة، ومناقشة محاولات تفسير انحطاط المسلمين في العصر الحديث.

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Finally, I thank my parents, Muhamed and Šemsa and sister Azra for standing by me throughout these years. I love them so much. Their support has been crucial in my life and it is to them that I dedicate this work.

Transliteration Table*

ا	a	د	d	غ	gh	بھ	bh
ب	b	ذ	dh	ف	f	پھ	ph
پ	p	ر	r	ق	q	تھ	th
ت	t	ز	z	ک	k	ٹھ	th
ٹ	ṭ	س	s	گ	g	جھ	jh
ث	th	ش	sh	ل	l	چھ	ch
ج	j	ص	sh	م	m	ڈھ	dh
چ	ch	ض	z	ن	n	ڈھ	dh
ح	h	ط	t	ہ	h	پھ	ph
خ	kh	ظ	z	ی	y	کھ	kh
د	d					گھ	gh

Long Vowels			Short Vowels		
ا		ā	ا		a
آ		ā	ا		i
ی	ی	ī	ا		u
و	و	ū			
و	(URDU)	ō			
و	(URDU)	ē			

Diphthongs			Doubled		
ا	ا	(ARABIC)	و	و	uww/uvv
ا	ا	(PERSIAN/URDU)	و	و	iiy
ا	ا	(TURKISH)			
ا	ا	(ARABIC)			
ا	ا	(PERSIAN/URDU)			
ا	ا	(TURKISH)			

Letter **و** is transliterated as elevated comma and is not expressed when at the beginning.

Letter **ع** is transliterated as inverted comma.

ج as Arabic letter is transliterated as *ḡ*, and as Persian/Turkish/Urdu letter as *z*.

و as Arabic letter is transliterated as *w*, and as Persian/Turkish/Urdu letter is transliterated as *v*.

و is transliterated as *ah* in pause form and as *ar* in construct form.

Article **ا** is transliterated as *al-* (*'l-* in construct form) whether followed by a moon or a sun letter.

و as a Persian/Urdu conjunction is transliterated as *-o*.

Short vowel **ا** in Persian/Urdu possessive or adjectival form is transliterated as *-i*.

*This Transliteration Table is taken from the scholarly journal of *Islamic Studies* which is published by Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

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Preface

The question of how Muslims responded to modernity and how did modernity affect their understanding of religion continues to be one of the most contested issues in today's world. Western scholarship on Islam has taken keen interest in the so called reformist and modernist thinkers such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839-1897), Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) and Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) and their responses to modernity, and by doing so, it intentionally or unintentionally helped to avert attention from other equally credible responses. This study is an attempt to explore an authentic Islamic response of Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī (1869-1954), the second last *Shaykh al-Islām* of the Ottoman Empire. His response stemmed from a particular discipline of traditional *Ilm al-Kalām* which had been shaping the Muslim thinking for centuries. As such, Ṣabrī's response has important implications on the continuity and change within the Islamic paradigm and the Muslim response to modernity. In a larger perspective, it also contributes to the global understanding of this troubling phenomenon of modernity that has so profoundly touched upon the lives of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The subject of religion and modernity generates immense interest in social sciences. As far as religious studies are concerned, it is important from two different yet closely related aspects. One is the task of examining the mutual influences that religion and modernity exercised on each other; the way they triggered reactions from both sides and the way they reformulated their original positions. Or, to put it simply, how each of them has been shaping and reshaping the perceptions of the other. The second aspect is concerned mainly with the manner religion has been approached; how it has been studied and which methods have been developed to comprehend its reality. Or, in other words, it is concerned with the inception of modern study of religion in the West. Both of these aspects have been significantly influenced by the triumph of science and its methodology and the novel ways of philosophical thinking and inquiry that eventually led to a

shift of paradigm in modern mentality and hence to a change of theories and points of reference that underlay the study of religion. These new perspectives initiated a tremendous crisis in theology, the traditional heir of religious studies, and caused mistrust and dissatisfaction in the religious circles around the globe. But they also opened new horizons for understanding of religion as a universal phenomenon and for comprehension of its position in the modern world that could no longer be neglected, ignored or underestimated.

The crisis that modernity brought about in the East, as opposed to the West, was further compounded and complicated by various disadvantages from within, and a plethora of unpleasant challenges from without. Brutal colonization, ungodly missionary efforts and large scale westernization left no time for sober contemplation. On the top of these were the intellectual challenges. The religion of Islam had to face them in the East like its sister religions, Judaism and Christianity, faced them in the West. As in the West, the inherited ways of studying religion were questioned in the East, and their ability to recreate their own worldview was doubted. That inevitably mistrusted their capacity to constructively encounter modern intellectual challenges and ways of dealing with Western religious and non-religious output. In the whole process, the uncritical adoption of Western terminology, concepts and methods seriously endangered the centuries old authentic Islamic scholarship.

The major mechanism that was responsible for determining and constructing Islamic views was submerged in crisis. Its main tool for thinking, understanding and criticizing, namely *Ilm al-Kalām*, was itself grappling with problems. In pre-modern times its duty was to intelligibly explain conceptual matters and make sense of them according to Islamic principles of revelation and common rules of rational thinking. However, it seemed that it could not keep pace with the intellectual developments that modernity had set off. Therefore, some voices among the Muslims started advocating straight-out discarding of *Kalām*. They held that the logic on which *Kalām* relied was superseded by modern logic, that the themes of *Kalām* were archaic and that it could not offer anything efficient

to resolve contemporary issues. Others agreed that *al-Kalām* faced tremendous challenges but they still believed that its revitalization was a better solution than its abrogation.¹ Their views on how *Kalām* should be revitalized varied. For instance in the late Ottoman Empire, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Kharṣūṭī (1842-1916) called for the establishment of a contemporary *‘Ilm al-Kalām*, or what he called “the *Kalām* of third era”, after the *Kalām* of *al-Mutaqaddimīn* and *al-Muta’akḥḥirīn*.² In addition, Ismā‘īl Haqqī (1868-1946) reflected this idea arguing that a new *Kalām* “should change according to new philosophical theories and expand in accordance with the needs of age”.³ Others like Muḥammad Ḥamdī Yazır al-Malalī (1878-1942) in his translation of *Histoire de la Philosophie*⁴ attempted an application of traditional *Kalām* in his commentaries on major modern philosophical issues.⁵

Another group of scholars, especially in Egypt, strived to revive Islamic philosophy as a whole. Through the efforts of the earliest and most forceful proponents such as Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Rāziq (1885-1947),⁶ and his disciples ‘Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār,⁷ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (1917-2002), Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī Abū Rīdah,⁸ Ibrāhīm Madkūr (1902-1995), *‘Ilm al-Kalām* again occupied a leading position along with other disciplines such as Peripatetic Philosophy, *al-Taṣawwuf* and *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* which were considered as important aspects of Islamic thinking.⁹

¹ For a brief and comprehensive overview of this trend, see: M. Sait Özervarlı, “Attempts to Revitalize Kalām in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries,” in *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXIX No. 1 (January, 1999), pp. 90-105.

² See: *Tārīkh ‘Ilm al-Kalām* (İstanbul, h. 1332), p. 111. His other important work is *Tanqīḥ al-Kalām* in which he regarded materialism as the main challenge to modern *‘Ilm al-Kalām*. He humbly requested his contemporaries to further carry on the task. See: Özervarlı, p. 95.

³ *Yeni ‘Ilm-i Kalām, Muḥaṣṣal al-Kalām wa ‘l-Ḥikmah* and “İslam’de Felsefe: Yeni ‘Ilm-i Kalām,” in *Sabīl al-Raḥād*, XIX/334 (h. 1333), p. 43. Quoted by Özervarlı, p. 95.

⁴ Paul Janet and Gabrielle Séailles (Paris: Delgrave, 1899), trans. Ada Monahan, ed. Henry Jones, *A History of the Problems of Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1902).

⁵ *Tahlil-i Tārīḥ-i Felsefe-Metalib ve Mezahib* (İstanbul: Haznedar Ofset Matbaası, 1978 [1926]).

⁶ In *Tamhīd li Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-İslāmīyyah* (Cairo, 1944) he argues that the Arabs had their indigenous philosophy and that they did not borrow it from Greeks.

⁷ For instance he edited Al-Suyūṭī’s *Ṣawn al-Manṭiq wa ‘l-Kalām ‘an ‘Ilm al-Manṭiq wa ‘l-Kalām* and *Naṣīḥat Ahl al-İmān fī ‘l-Rādd ‘alā Manṭiq al-Yūnān* (Cairo, 1947).

⁸ He edited the letters of Al-Kindī. See: *Rasā’il al-Kindī al-Falsafīyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1950).

⁹ This tradition was later on carried by Maḥmūd Qāsim and ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd. It continued with Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Shāfi’i and ‘Abd al-Faḍīl al-Qūṣī who also emphasize revitalization of

A closely related aspect of *Kalām* is *ʿIlm al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*. Its purpose may best be perceived as an attempt to produce accurate understanding of *Religions and Philosophical Schools*¹⁰ as its classic name indicates. Based on that, a critical Islamic understanding of Islam as a religion, theology and thought was constructed and an Islamic view of the 'other' made within the *Kalāmī* paradigm. This instrument becomes extremely important in the modern times as the Muslims explored ways of reaffirming their intellectual identity in the face of Western ideological and intellectual onslaught. In order to adequately respond to modernity Muslims had to understand it. The discipline of *ʿIlm al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal* was supposed to provide accurate understanding of modernity while the *Kalām* would formulate a critical response. But many Muslim thinkers did not make this mechanism work out.

However, the process of reviving *ʿIlm al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal* in the modern times goes hand in hand with the efforts to revitalize *Kalām* and Islamic philosophy. Al-Imām Abū Zahrah introduced a subject on comparative religion in Al-Azhar University.¹¹ Dr. ʿAbd Allāh Darrāz authored an introduction to the study of religion in which he summarized the major trends in the West.¹² Prominent Egyptian thinker ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād studied Islam comparatively with other religions in his celebrated *Allāh: Kitāb fi Nashʾat al-ʿAqīdah al-Ilāhiyyah*.¹³ While tracing the earliest examples of scientific study of religion in pre-modern age, the Western scholars stumbled over stunning examples

Kalām in their writings. Ḥasan Ḥanafī does the same but with the human being at its centre instead of God which traditionalist consider very controversial.

¹⁰ A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn rendered the Arabic *al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal* into *Muslim Sects and Divisions*. See: *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal* by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (Brooklyn: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

¹¹ He wrote *Muḥadarāt fi ʿl-Naṣrāniyyah* (Riyadh: Al-Riʾāṣah al-ʿĀmmah li Idārāt al-Buḥūth al-ʿIlmiyyah wa ʿl-Daʿwah wa ʿl-Irshād, h. 1404 [1949]) and later on *Muqāranāt al-Adyān: Al-Adyān al-Qadimah*, (Cairo: Maʿhad al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah, 1965). For a critical appreciation of his contribution see: C. C. Adams, "Comparative Religion in the Azhar University," in *The Muslim World*, Vol. 35. Issue 2. (April, 1945), pp. 111-125.

¹² The full title is *Al-Dīn: Buḥūth Mumabhidah li Dirāsāt Tārīkh al-Adyān* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1990).

¹³ In *Mawsūʿat ʿAbbās Maḥmūd Al-ʿAqqād al-Islāmiyyah*, 5. vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1970 [1947]).

of Islamic contribution in the discipline of *ʿIlm al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*. They edited the classic works of figures such as Abū Rayḥān al-Bayrūnī (d. 1050),¹⁴ Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (d. 1064),¹⁵ Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111)¹⁶ and Abū al-Faṭḥ Al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153)¹⁷, but they did not start to analyze them seriously till the 20th century. Well-known Western Islamists such as H. A. R. Gibb highly praised the classical Muslim contribution to the study of religion.¹⁸ So did the contemporary Western scholars of comparative religion such as Eric J. Sharpe¹⁹ and Jacques Waardenburg²⁰. Simultaneously, the Muslim researchers explored the field. S. H. Nasr,²¹ Ismāʿīl R. Fārūqī,²² M. ʿAbd Allāh al-Sharqāwī²³ and Dheen Muḥammad²⁴ to name a few only. As recently as 1999 Isa Maishano compared between classical Muslim and modern Western methods in the study of religion.²⁵

Reviewing their works, one can identify several conclusions: they almost agree that the classical Muslims established the field of what later came to be

¹⁴ E. Sachau, ed. and trans. *Al-Bīrūnī's India* (London: Kegan, Trench, Trunber, 1914 rpr. Hyderabad, 1958).

¹⁵ *Kitāb al-Fiṣal fī ʿl-Milal wa ʿl-Aḥwāʾ wa ʿl-Niḥal* was printed in two volumes (Cairo, 1899-1903). For its analytical study see: Ghulam Haider Aasi, *Muslim Understanding of Other Religions: A Study of Ibn Hazm's Kitāb al-Fiṣal fī al-Milal wa ʿl-Aḥwāʾ wa ʿl-Niḥal* (Islamabad: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1999).

¹⁶ Robert Chidiac S.J. edited, translated and commented on the text of *Al-Radd al-Jamīl li Ilāhiyyat ʿĪsā bi Ṣarīḥ al-Injīl* and published it under *Al- Ghazali, Réfutation excellente de la divinité de Jésus-Christ d'après les Evangiles* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1938).

¹⁷ First edited by W. Cureton, *Kitāb al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal* in *Books of Religions and Philosophical Sects*, 2. vols. (London, 1842-1846). Translated into German by T. Haarbrucker, *Religionspartheien und Philosophen-Schulen*, 2.vols. (Halle, 1850-51). Muḥammad Faṭḥ Allāh Badrān edited it in Arabic as *Kitāb al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Anglo Miṣriyyah, 1366-1375/1947-1955).

¹⁸ See: *Arabic Literature* (Oxford: 1926; substantially rev. ed., 1963; reprint, 1974), pp. 126-127.

¹⁹ See: *Comparative Religion: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p. 11.

²⁰ See: "World Religions as Seen in the Light of Islam," in Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia, eds. *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge* (Edinburgh University Press, 1979), pp. 245-275. He also edited and contributed chapters to. *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 1-102.

²¹ "Islam and Other Religions," in his *Sufi Essays* (New York: State University of New York, 1973), pp. 123-152.

²² See: "Islam and Other Faiths," in Altaf Gauhar, ed. *The Challenge of Islam* (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1978), pp. 82-111.

²³ *Fī Muqāranat al-Adyān: Buhūth wa Dirāsāt* (Madinat Naṣr: Dār al-Hidāyah, 1986).

²⁴ "Min Manāḥij ʿUlamāʾ al-Muslimīn fī Dirāsāt al-Adyān," in *Ḥawliyat al-Jāmiʿah al-Islāmiyyah al-ʿĀlamīyyah*, Islamabad, Issue No.3, 1995. pp. 124-127.

²⁵ See: *The Comparative Method in the Study of Religion: A Case Study of Al-ʿĀmirī and al-Bīrūnī and Some Selected Modern Approaches* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, International Islamic University Islamabad, Faculty of Usuluddin, Department of Comparative Religion, Islamabad, 1999/1420).

known as comparative religion; they invented and implemented what may be called a scientific method long before modern Westerners and thus they may be regarded as predecessors and pioneers of modern study of religion. They also concluded that the classic Islamic contribution has not been appreciated enough in the modern times.

However, the praise and celebration of the Muslim contribution to the study of religion and philosophical schools in the past is suddenly silenced when the same classic methods of *Kalām* and *ʿIlm al-Milal wa ʿl-Niḥal* are applied on contemporary issues in the modern context. There is a tendency to label them as theological and unworthy of serious attention. Presumably, they do not conform to the spirit of modern scientific inquiry. The efforts to study the modern application of classical *Kalām* methodology are rare when compared to the efforts in rediscovering the *Mutakallimūn*'s contribution to the pre-modern study of religion and philosophical schools. This by itself indicates that the modern *Kalāmī* contribution has not been taken seriously enough. Moreover, one cannot resist the impression that the interest of the Westerners and Muslim students in the modern intellectual Muslim contribution seems to have shifted to the study of pro-Western modernists and the so called reformists while the application of the classical *Kalām* in its traditional grandiose style remained under-researched and miserably neglected. Perhaps it is one of the paradoxes in the state of modern Muslim and Western academia that such an important tool of Islamic thinking that is considered to be the defining factor in determining the very character of Muslim intellectual identity in the classical period is totally disregarded in the modern period.

In a broader perspective, the non-Muslim and Muslim interest in the Islamic classical and modern heritage has been critically questioned, perhaps most prominently and articulately by late Edward Said²⁶ who particularly exposed the bias of Western scholarship towards the Orient. On the other hand, Frank

²⁶ See: *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

Whaling,²⁷ who specializes in the study of religion, feels that something similar happened in the study of religion, which according to him, remained dominated by the West for too long. He suggests that the West does not take the modern non-Western contribution to the study of religion seriously. Although the modern Eastern and Muslim contribution is meager when compared to the Western, yet, according to him, it is important to enlarge its scope and vision and to validate the claim of the Western contribution as a global contribution to the study of religion. Hence, the study of religion should not remain a one-sided affair. He holds that recognizing the non-Western contribution and integrating the Eastern and Western perspectives will help integrate the knowledge on a global level.

In addition to that, the theology which has been distrusted for so long has been reaffirmed by the strong voices of Raimundo Panikkar,²⁸ Keith Ward²⁹ and W. C. Smith.³⁰ Although in different ways, all the three highlight the importance of theology in the modern study of religion. Whaling also supports this view and calls for a closer cooperation between religious studies and theology.³¹

i. Statement of the Problem

The present study on religion and modernity in the thought of one of the latest and perhaps most influential *Shuyūkh al-Islām* of the late Ottoman Empire, Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī, comes to highlight these various perspectives on the unfolding relation between religion and modernity and the study of religion in the modern times from a Muslim scholar who received his traditional training in classical sciences like *al-Tafsīr*, *al-Ḥadīth*, *al-Fiqh*, Logic, *al-Falsafah*, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* and

²⁷ See: "The Study of Religion in a Global Context," in *Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion. Volume I: The Humanities* (Berlin, New York and Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers, 1984), pp. 391-397.

²⁸ See: *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (New York: Orbis, 1973).

²⁹ See: *Reason and Revelation: A Theology of Revelation in World's Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³⁰ See: *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) and especially his *What is Scripture?* (London: SCM, 1993).

³¹ See: "Theological Approaches," in Peter Connolly, ed. *Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London: Continuum, 1999), pp. 226-274.

especially *al-Kalām* that definitely shaped Muslim thought; a Muslim scholar who confidently and courageously engages with the intellectual challenges that modernity poses to his religion and classical upbringing and education. In spite of all odds, Ṣabrī continues to have an unshaken trust in their validity and ability to deliver in the modern times although many of his contemporaries have their reservations about that. For him, *Kalām* is not a dead tradition that needs revitalization. For him it is a living tradition that he rigorously applies on the critical issues that modernity brings about. Thus, he contributes to the study of religion from a distinct point of view that he believes to be relevant for Muslim and non-Muslim, Eastern and Western traditions alike. The platform from which he engages does not draw on the modern assumptions and principles but rather on the centuries old Islamic scholarship and tradition that affirms religion as a reality and accepts its frame of reference. Therefore, he fruitfully combines the theological perspective together with religious studies, ancient and modern philosophies, science and socio-political realities of his times. His deep regard for authentic Islamic scholarship and critical attitude towards modernity creates a blend of a distinctive discourse that unfortunately did not draw the attention that it deserves, neither in the East nor in the West.

To illustrate this further, imagine that *al-Imām* Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149-1209) has been resurrected in the modern period with his classic outlook, intellectual ability, and amazing confidence in what he knows and believes, what would be his reaction to the philosophical, religious, cultural and socio-political climate of the time? Instead of imagining *al-Imām* al-Rāzī one can easily substitute this imagination with the real personality of *Shaykh al-Islām* Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī. Ṣabrī, with all his references, resembles more a personality that comes from classic times than somebody who lives in the first half of the 20th century. He is not a mere critic of modernist trends in Islam, rather he is somebody who offers and advocates a sound and potential alternative which embodies original Islamic intellectuality which predates the advent of modernity. Subsequently, the encounter of religion and modernity in his thought is in fact the encounter of classic and modern with

all the shades of meaning that these two words can possibly carry. In other words, it is the encounter of his classic mentality, upbringing, education, scholarly training and worldview facing the powerful challenge of modern outlooks and perceptions. How does he make this encounter possible, what are its results and how meaningful can it be is the simplest summary of what this dissertation aims to undertake.

More specifically: how does Ṣabrī perceive modernity? What concepts and components does he identify as essential to it? What concepts are not essential to it? On what basis does he observe so? Moreover, how does he apply classical tools in dealing with modernity? On the other hand, what is the position of religion in relation to modernity according to him? What changes brought about by modernity is he willing to accommodate, what not and on what basis? What does he consider as primary and unalterable in religion, and what secondary and changeable? What does he think about modern approaches in the study of religion? To what extent are they acceptable and to what extent not? Finally, what are the major religious issues that he explores and how does he do it. These are some of the interesting questions that this dissertation would hope to address.

ii. Review of Literature

The credit for taking interest in *Shaykh* Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī goes to Arab writers. Over the decades, their interest has been increasing and their study of Ṣabrī becoming more profound and serious. For instance, in the same year Ṣabrī passed away, Dr. Muḥammad Muḥammad Ḥusayn in his book *'Al-Itijāhāt al-Waṭaniyyah fī 'l-Adab al-Mu'āṣir* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1984 [1954]) gave a brief biographical account of Ṣabrī and an introductory note about his published works in Arabic Language. Gradually, Muslim intellectuals started to recognize and rank Ṣabrī among prominent and outspoken scholars of the twentieth century. For example 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah includes him in his *Ṣafahāt min Ṣabr al-'Ulamā' 'alā Shadā'id al-'Ilm wa 'l-Taḥṣīl* (Ḥalab: Maktabah al-Maṭbū'āt al-Islāmiyyah, 1971). He particularly quotes his famous poem in which Ṣabrī

compares his fasting and Ghandi's hunger strike. A decade later, Anwar al-Jundī, in a more extensive, comprehensive and evaluating account in *A'lām al-Qarn al-Rābi' 'Ashar al-Hijrī* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Anglo al-Miṣriyyah, 1981) rates Ṣabrī among the most important Muslim intellectual figures of the twentieth century. These two religious figures affirmed the position of Ṣabrī in religious circles, Islamic movements and among the intellectuals. With Dr. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī a kind of academic interest is developed in Ṣabrī. In his *Al-Asrār al-Khaṣiyyah warā Ilghā al-Khilāfah al-'Uthmāniyyah* (Alexandria: Dār al-Da'wah, 1985), Ḥilmī edits Sabri's *al-Nakīr* and produces an overview of the general circumstances that led to the abrogation of the caliphate. He emphasizes that Ṣabrī happened to be the only sober figure who warned Waḥīd al-Dīn of Kamal Pasha's intentions. By this time approximately, few scholars register PhD topics on Ṣabrī. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abduh in his PhD *Difā' al-Shaykh Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī 'an al-Fikr al-Ash'arī fī 'l-'Asr al-Ḥadīth* (1989) discussed Ṣabrī's adoption of Ash'arite school of thought concerning the issue of predestination and human actions. Minshāwī 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ismā'il submitted a PhD dissertation to Dār al-'Ulūm, Cairo, titled *Mawqif Shaykh al-Islām Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī min al-Qaḍāyā al-Kalāmiyyah wa 'l-Falsafiyyah fī 'l-'Asr al-Ḥadīth* (1990). He dealt with Ṣabrī's treatment of theological and philosophical issues, namely: God, God and universe, God and human being, prophethood and miracles and some socio-political aspects of Ṣabrī's thought. As Minshāwī mentions, his chief aim is to present Ṣabrī's views in a more comprehensive and understandable fashion because, as Ṣabrī himself concedes, his ideas are not put systematically. The purpose of systematizing Ṣabrī's ideas is therefore justified, but it is unusual how the author tries to distance Ṣabrī from his distinctive *Kalāmī* background and present him in a somewhat *Salafī* robe.

A more serious attempt and the only published M.A. thesis comes from Dr. Mufarriḥ ibn Sulaymān al-Qawṣī in his *Al-Shaykh Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī wa Mawqifuh min al-Fikr al-Wāfid* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 1997). This study is divided into two parts. The first part is about Sabri's life, times, academic and political engagements as well as his published and unpublished works

in both Ottoman Turkish and Arabic languages. It is quite an extensive study in itself, apart from the rest of the thesis, and perhaps the first of its kind. It is well documented and groundbreaking in its own right. The second part is about Şabrî's response to Western thought. This part is flooded with quotations of Şabrî with little or no analysis. Like Minshāwī, the author falls into contradiction when he concludes with remarks that stand against everything Şabrî fought for, namely: application of Logic, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* and particularly *Kalām* in dealing with Western thought. Both of them did not feel that if they dismiss *Kalām* and criticize Şabrî because of its rigorous application they actually dismiss Şabrî's work and contribution in its totality. The title of *Shaykh al-Islām* henceforth becomes meaningless and does not signify anything beyond the official position that he held.

Abū Ghuddah and al-Jundī have already secured Şabrî's position among the prominent '*ulamā*' in the twentieth century especially among the religious-activist youth. But, Dr. Aḥmad Jādd in his *Falsafat al-Mashrū' al-Ḥaḍārī bayn al-Iḥyā' al-Islāmī wa 'l-Taḥdīth al-Gharbī* (Herdon, VA. USA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995) emphasizes the intellectual role that Şabrî constructively played in Egypt shoulder to shoulder with Muḥammad 'Abduh, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Rashīd Riḍā and others, and thus attempts to affirm Şabrî's position especially among the academicians.

Mehmet Kadri Karabela's *One of the Last Ottoman Shaykhūlislāms, Mustafa Sabri Effendi (1869-1954): His Life, Works and Intellectual Contributions* (Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 2003) is perhaps the first study on Şabrî in English language which is indeed a good development. Karabela struggles to shake the prevalent view in the West that Islamic thought has been stagnant for many centuries. He argues that Islamic thought has never been seriously interrupted, and as a proof for that he gives the example of Şabrî. He successfully recreates the modern context to which Şabrî responds and then talks about Şabrî's life and works basing himself on Al-Qawsī but yet he adds new interesting information and sources in Turkish

language that improve our understanding of Şabrî's life. However, when it comes to Şabrî's thought, Karabela briefly touches upon a spectrum of ideas, without establishing linkages between them, perhaps trying to illustrate the variety and richness of Şabrî's intellectual corpus but, which in the end, happens to appear incoherent and disconnected.

In a very recent study titled *The Ulema, their Institutions, and Politics in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876-1924)* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Near Eastern Studies: Princeton University, 2006) Amit Bein shows that Şabrî played a far more important role in the process of the *madrasah* reformation and political struggle in the closing years of the Empire than was previously known. What is particularly interesting for my research is that Bein studies the public and political engagement of 'ulamā' in those critical times and in Bein's thesis Şabrî emerges as the most prominent among them. Bein continuously refers to Şabrî, and in recognition to his significance devotes the final chapter to his views. This attempt clearly signals a change in the Western approach towards the late Ottoman history, the role of 'ulamā' and in particular, the contribution of *Shaykh al-Islām* Muṣṭafā Şabrî which was so much neglected in the East as well as in the West.

For a long period of time it was dangerous to write about Mustafa Sabri in Turkish language because of his vehement opposition to the Kemalist regime. Nevertheless, most of his books are translated from Ottoman Turkish and Arabic and published in modern Turkish. There are many introductory articles on Sabrî and his thought in Islamic magazines as well as the web, but serious studies are still awaited. In this regard, good developments are Ismail Karan's chapter on Sabrî in his book on basic texts in modern Islamic thought in Turkey, titled: *Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi-Metinler/Kişiler*, 3 vols. (İstanbul: Risale Yay. 1st. vol., 1986; 2nd. vol., 1987 and 3rd. vol. İstanbul: Pınar Yay., 1994), and Yusuf Şevki Yavusi's article on Şabrî in 31st volume of *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2006).

iii. Methodology

In general terms, a threefold method is employed, namely: (a) analysis; which will enable me to reach a deeper level of understanding, (b) comparison; which will further crystallize the concepts, and (c) criticism; which will expose weak and strong points giving way to new understanding and further suggestions. More specifically, I relate Ṣabī's positions with the traditional *Kalāmī* view which is his major point of reference and I try to trace them back to their origins. Regarding modernity, I use Ṣabī's sources but critically and I also try to put them into the context of recent studies. Wherever I thought it useful and for the purpose of clarification I related his views to the views of the Islamic thinkers that we have become more familiar with. Finally, since the subject of religion and modernity has most prominently been expounded in his four volumes *magnum opus* of *Mawqif al-'Aql wa 'l-'Ilm wa 'l-'Ālam min Rabb al-'Ālamīn wa 'Ibādih al-Mursalīn* this study is cantered upon it but it also includes references to his other works.

Introduction

Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī and his Understanding of Modernity: Sources, Intellectual Environment and Circumstances

In this introduction an attempt is made to study the main sources, causes and circumstances that might have contributed, significantly or otherwise, to the development and shaping of *Shaykh al-Islām* Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī's understanding of modernity. That will, hopefully, be helpful in tracing back the origins of his understanding of modernity and thus enhance the prospects for further analysis and evaluation of its chief components and elements. My aim however is not to write a biographical account of his life nor to introduce his works because that has already been done in a good way.³²

It must have been a challenging task for Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī to totally comprehend modernity with its baffling variety while still being an "outsider" but it might have been a helping circumstance that he was, so to say, an "insider" to it. Ṣabrī was an outsider in the sense that he was brought up in an Eastern religious tradition which relied heavily on, what many modernist of his time would likely term as, "medieval ways of thinking". Both these aspects, namely religion and medieval ways of thinking, were severely attacked by modernists which subsequently confronted Ṣabrī's core perceptions and *weltanschauung*. On the other hand, Ṣabrī was an insider as well, due to modernity's expansion and strong influence in the East. So, modernity, in spite of Ṣabrī's liking or disliking captured him in place and time. It became a fact of his life.

³² For instance, see: Mufarriḥ b. Sulaymān al-Qawsī, *Al-Shaykh Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī wa Maṣṣūfāt min al-Fikr al-Wāfīd* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 1997), pp. 15-300; Tawfiq Islām Yaḥyā, *Shaykh al-Islām Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Bābars, 1996); Mehmet Kadri Karabela, *One of the Last Ottoman Shaykhulislams, Mustafa Sabri Effendi (1869-1954): His Life, Works and Intellectual Contributions* (Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 2003), pp. 36-64; Yusuf Şevki Yavusi, "Mustafa Sabri," in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2006), v. 31, pp. 350-353. For an account of his personality from one of his contemporaries, see: M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Üstad Ali Ulvi Kurucu: Hatıralar-2* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2007). I hope that a complete biography of Ṣabrī covering all aspects of his life may be written one day.

i. Traditional Education

From the scarce and scattered autobiographical accounts and the most authoritative biographical records, it is an established fact that Muṣṭafā Şabrî did not attend any formal Western education inside or outside the Muslim World, unlike some of his contemporaries and major Muslim thinkers who did. He did not avail that opportunity, although by the time of his youth, educational institutions and schools, which taught Western curriculum in Turkey, had already been established and young Muslim students had been sent to Western countries to pursue their higher education.³³ The education that Şabrî acquired in his childhood was the traditional Islamic education of the *madrasah* in his birth town of Tokat, then at Kaysari in his teenage years and finally in Istanbul in his early twenties.³⁴ The question that should be addressed here is what he could have learned about modernity in the seminaries he attended and how that kind of education could have intellectually prepared him to encounter modernity?

During the many centuries of Muslim intellectual and cultural dominance in the World and Western medieval negligence of its philosophical Greco-Roman heritage, the *Mutakallimūn* —the Muslim theologians—, philosophers and mystics took up the task of not only preserving the treasures of antiquity, but actually by

³³ Apart from engineering, medical and military schools that were established by the Imperial Decree of 1856, schools in the humanities were established following the French model of *grandes écoles*, such as The School of Political Science (Mekteb-i Mülkiye, 1859), Lycée de Galatasaray (Mekteb-i Sultani, 1868), The Law School (Mekteb-i Hukuk, 1880). Even in Paris an Ottoman school, the Mekteb-i Osmani, was founded in 1857 to prepare students sent there by the state for French education. For information on these early professional schools by some Western authors who either taught there or saw them in their visit, see Giambattista Toderini, *Letteratura Turchesca* (Venezia: Presso G. Storti, 1787); Charles MacFarlane, *Turkey and Its Destiny: The Result of Journeys Made in 1847 and 1848 to Examine into the State of That Country* (London: J. Murray, 1850). See: M. Sait Özervarlı, "Alternative Approaches to Modernization in the Late Ottoman Empire: İzmirli İsmail Hakkı's Religious Thought Against Materialist Scientism," in *Int. J. Middle East Studies*, vol. 39, p. 96, endnote no. 10. On medieval Islamic education and its modernization from intellectual point of view, see: Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1984). For recent studies on this subject, see: Selçuk Akcin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), and Benjamin Fortna, *The Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

³⁴ See: Al-Qawsi, pp. 24-25; Karabela, pp. 36-37.

studying and criticizing it they contributed to it in various enriching ways. The least they did was that they preserved the old continent's heritage and channelled it back to its origin at a crucial time of its pre-modern history, a fact that has been overemphasized while creative aspects of Muslim contribution have been minimalized. This point of view regarding the role and contribution of Muslims to philosophy has been prevalent among leading Western orientalists and Islamists for quite a long time and only recently orientalists have come to appreciate the Muslim creative and innovative contribution. But the fact is that classical Muslim thinkers have critically incorporated a lot of Greco-Roman heritage in their own thought especially the peripatetic philosophers, theologians and later theosophers. Islamic theology and philosophy, of which logic has been a vital part, have constituted together a group of subjects that have been referred to as *al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah* or the rational disciplines complementing *al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah* or the transmitted disciplines. These two branches still continue to make up the core of traditional Islamic education. Since Europeans consider Greco-Roman intellectual heritage as the main source for modernity and indeed modern Western civilization, and since traditional Islamic discourse has incorporated a lot of these sources, it can be argued that Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī, who has undergone extensive traditional education, was more than aware of those ancient sources of the modern West. Therefore, if modernity is understood as a return to and a renewal of the ancient schools of Greco-Roman civilizations, then it would not have been unfamiliar for anyone who has been trained in traditional Islamic sciences, especially for Ṣabrī who excelled in them. It seems that some scholars of modern Islam, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, have not paid enough attention to this point and have not emphasized it sufficiently. But, quite conversely, due to its significance in the relation between Islam and modernity it can never be overemphasized. Consequently, when Ṣabrī embarked on this enterprise, he did not start from scratch, as some would perhaps wrongly assume. Rather, he started from a very solid basis that was deeply rooted in the long-time established practice of conventional Islamic scholarship. So, the Sophists from pre-Socratic era, the

materialists and naturalists, the sceptics, the emphasis on reasoning and observation and a rather loose commitment to religion are some of the ancient themes dealt with in classical Islamic works and which, most importantly, re-emerge as imperative factors in various shapes in the modern times. Examples of those classical authors whom Ṣabrī considers as mentors and whom he quotes extensively are many. But for the sake of illustration I will mention only a few: Al-Qāḍī 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ī'jī (d. 756), Al-'Allamah Sa'ad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 793), Al-'Allamah Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 812), Al-Mawlawī Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Khayālī (d. 862), Al-Muḥaqqiq Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī (d. 928), Al-Fāḍil 'Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Siyālkūtī (d. 1067), Al-Muḥaqqiq Ismā'il Muṣṭafā al-Kalanbawī (d. 1205), Khudrī Bek (d. 1458) and others.³⁵

Ṣabrī's traditional Islamic education is relevant also in the sense that it treated some perennial questions. The major questions of human philosophical and religious thought such as the question of the ultimate beginning and end, existence, universe, human being, God, meaning, purpose, values and their apparent and intrinsic relations, seem to repeat from one system of thought to another with minor or major differences and they are common themes of classical Islamic scholarship and modernity. Other topics may be regarded as different variations and diverse modifications and proliferations of the possible innate answers and logical conclusions that may issue thereof. No two systems can exist to have absolutely nothing in common. At least, they may have some similar presuppositions to share. It is important to point this out because of the widespread impression, in some quarters, that the Western thought in general, and modernity in particular, were such a puzzle for Muslims thinkers that they could not have grasped its meaning and that it went far beyond the reach of their comprehension. At a certain point of Western history, especially during the sway of modernity, Europeans felt so proud of their civilizational achievements that

³⁵ See: Al-Qawṣī, pp. 173-174.

they thought that nobody could compete with them, or come close to them.³⁶ Muṣṭafā Şabrî realized how Europeans boast about themselves and he dismissed this notion on the basis of Western scientific progress and military supremacy, not on their exceptional intellectual abilities.³⁷ And although Muslims could not match them in these two fields, they could—at least—match them on intellectual grounds.³⁸

The traditional Islamic education is also important in so far as it imposed some critical methodological rules in dealing with modernity. The encompassing traditional training made Muṣṭafā Şabrî aware that proper understanding of modernity was a crucial precondition for any meaningful discussion, criticism or dialogue. However, he did not seek to comprehend modernity *per se* and stop there. Rather, to begin with, he wanted to develop an adequate understanding of modernity and then to encounter it fully equipped and prepared. Most importantly, he wanted to treat modernity on an equal footing and not as an inferior, much like modernity's prominent representatives in the West and its staunch partisans in the East had done for a long time.

Furthermore, from the *Kalamî* methodological point of view, which was so dear to Şabrî and to which glorious tradition he proudly subscribed, he was obliged to grasp the position of *al-khaṣm* or the opponent and then to make a *radd* or a response to it. This intrinsic feature of *Kalām* trained its student to explore, determine and respond to the ideas be they rooted in Islam or outside of it. Therefore, many portions of these classical texts perhaps have no theological value but they have always been studied carefully because they were considered good intellectual exercises. Take for example *Al-Imām* Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505).

³⁶ See: Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1960), and R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978).

³⁷ *Mawqif al-'Aql wa 'l-'Ilm wa 'l-'Ālam min Rabb al-'Ālāmīn wa 'Ibādih al-Mursalīn*, 2nd. ed. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1981), v. 1, p. 61. For a Turkish translation of this work, see: İbrahim Sabri, *Şeyhülislam Mustafa Sabri Efendi'nin Mısır Ulemasıyla İlmî Münakaşaları Efendi*, edited in modern Turkish by Osman Erdem (İstanbul: Gül Neşriyat Sanayi Ticaret Ltd. Şti., 2005). So far, only first volume was published.

³⁸ Ibid.

Unfortunately, it seems that Şabrî did not find enough time and resources to present modernity as such in a separate piece of work as his distant predecessor did when encountering Peripatetic philosophers. As it is widely known, Al-Ghazālî authored a small but comprehensive book on Peripatetic Philosophy *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* in which he presented it as any of the Peripatetic philosophers would have done. The analysts always say that Al-Ghazālî did it in order to prove his complete mastership over their revered discipline and to convince everybody that he had command over its smallest details. And as soon as his knowledge of philosophy was recognized, he released the book *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* which is said to have buried Peripatetic philosophy in the Muslim East for a very long period of time. Hence the example of Al-Ghazālî is very illustrative of the *Kalāmî* method at a macro level because he authored a separate book on certain views and then he criticized them in another book, while *Al-Imām* Al-Rāzî (d. 1209), represents it on a micro level because he incorporated the views of the opponents and their criticism in one, not two separate works. And in that sense Şabrî resembles *Al-Imām* Al-Rāzî more than *Al-Imām* al-Ghazālî. This comparison becomes even more important because Şabrî admits that in his responses to modernity he was inspired by his predecessors' response to the Greco-Roman heritage.³⁹

On the other hand, Şabrî, Al-Ghazālî and Al-Rāzî share one common drawback that is that all the three of them did not have any acquaintance with the languages of civilization with which they engaged. Just as Al-Ghazālî and Al-Rāzî did not know Greek, so Şabrî did not know either French or English. Interestingly enough, besides their mother languages, all three of them mastered at least one more language of Islamic civilization; Arabic. The three of them relied on the available translations which were supplied by others. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the translations which were available to Şabrî's predecessors were

³⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2 p. 139.

better in quality and more in number.⁴⁰ It seems that a similar situation had been prevailing in the West as well, namely, no significant Western thinker was equipped with any of non-Western languages. They may have been fluent in Greek or Latin but not in Arabic, Persian or, say, Japanese. Additionally, they had academic knowledge of at least two other European languages as did Muslim thinkers who mastered at least one language, Persian, Turkish or recently Urdu, along with Arabic. This perhaps proves the importance of the link between medium of expression and philosophical ideas within a certain civilization, Eastern or Western. It seems, and it is somehow natural, that the major thinkers have always expressed their ideas in the language of civilization to which they belonged. And as they have not been criticized for that, nor were their intellectual achievements repudiated or belittled for not knowing the language of other civilizations, likewise, Şabrî should not be blamed for not knowing any European language, nor should his intellectual achievement be underestimated for that reason.

Regarding the accumulation of appropriate knowledge about modern Europe in the traditional system of Islamic education, it can be argued that neither the Ottomans nor the Arabs seem to have done much about it. Moreover, what was more dangerous, neither of them considered it important. Except for a few attempts, Muslims could not take pride that they applied idealistic Islamic call for knowledge especially in studying what was outside their westernmost borders. Bernard Lewis for instance, summarizes the interest of the Ottomans in Europe from the Middle Ages till the nineteen century in the following words:

For most Ottoman Muslims, the only achievements of Europe worthy of attention were in the arts of war, and these could be studied in captured guns and ships with aid of prisoners and renegades. That the languages, literatures, arts, and philosophers of Europe could be of any interest or relevance to them did not enter their minds, and such European movements of ideas as the Renaissance and Reformation awoke no echo and found no

⁴⁰ See: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and Modern Science," a lecture delivered to Muslim students at MIT. URL: = <<http://web.mit.edu/mitmsa/www/NewSite/libstuff/nasr/nasrspeech1.html>>. Retrieved in May 2005.

response among Muslim peoples – no more than did Muslim movements of ideas in the Europe of that time.⁴¹

For this reason, Muṣṭafā Şabrî could not have learned anything particular about latest, for him, contemporary developments in Europe through his traditional education which inculcated perhaps nothing about the Western modernity in its syllabus. Ideally, this was, of course, a very regrettable fact for him as a student that he was not properly introduced to the European trends in his young and formative age. However, practically no full-fledged educational institution had an Islamic critical understanding of modernity inculcated in its programme. In this sense, Şabrî was perhaps lucky not to have been indoctrinated on modernity in his youth as it happened to his countrymen who enrolled in new schools established on Western models. Relying on traditional learning and heavily drawing from it, he, therefore, started learning about modernity on his own without any formal instructions.

ii. Translations of European works in the Ottoman Turkish Language

During the peak of the Ottoman Empire the main translations were conducted through interpretations and explanations.⁴² Although the Ottomans were successfully expanding towards Europe, they did not seem to be interested in translating its books. Similarly, the position which Europeans adopted towards the Easterners, especially Muslims, was not ideal either. But, by the twelfth century, the situation in Christendom considerably improved thanks to Peter the Venerable (1092-1156) who initiated a process of translation from Eastern languages especially Arabic into Latin.⁴³ Due to these two different attitudes towards translation:

⁴¹ *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), p. 159.

⁴² See: Berrin Aksoy, "Translation Activities in the Ottoman Empire," in *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*, vol. 50, Issue 3, (April 2005), pp. 950-951.

⁴³ For more details about the Peter the Venerable and his project see: J. Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), part 2, vol. 1, pp. 69-85, and James Kritizek, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964).

by the eighteenth century, a considerable body of Arabic, to a lesser extent, Persian and Turkish poetry and other literature was available in translation in most of the languages of Europe, not a single work of literature had been translated into any Islamic language from any European language.⁴⁴

The Muslim Ottomans did not have their "Peter the Venerable" at the early stage of the Empire and translations from European languages did not appear till the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In contrast to Peter the Venerable who wanted to translate the basic Muslim literature, namely the Qur'ān and the Sunnah from which Muslims deduce their belief and ideology, and thus discover the way Muslim mind works, it seems that the masterpieces of European philosophers, who in fact played the leading role in intellectual life, were not the primary target of early translations. Rather it was the applied sciences that impressed the rulers who wanted to advance Ottoman military power and consequently consolidate their political dominance in the world. However, by the passage of time, the translators developed interest in European fiction which naturally carried its own human vision so typical of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴⁵ The new spirit in the Orient was first expressed in literature.⁴⁶ The Turks "were glad to read even crude writing if it had a modern message".⁴⁷ They were "imitative no longer of Persians but of French".⁴⁸ The process of translation intensified during *Tanzimat* or Reordering (1838-1876) and gave birth to a small organization of Young Turks⁴⁹ who in their works integrated the ideals of modernity into mainstream Turkish literature. The new trend of translation of European ideas included names such as Münif Pasha (1830-1910) who translated from Voltaire to Fontenelle, Yusuf Kamil Pasha (1808-1876) who rendered Fénelon *Télémaque*, Ziya Pasha (1825-1880) who

⁴⁴ Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, p. 277.

⁴⁵ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Vol 3: The Gunpowder Empires and the Modern Times* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 256.

⁴⁶ Ibid, v. 3, p. 251.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, v. 3, p. 251.

⁴⁹ See: M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), and *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

translated J. J. Rousseau's *Emile* and Molière's *Tartuffe* from French while Tarhan Abdülhak Hamid (1852-1937) translated Shakespeare from English. Others such as İbrahim Şinasi (1826-1871), Namık Kemal (1840-1880), Abdullah Cevdet (1822-1895), Ahmet Mithat (1844-1912) and Mehmet Tevfik (1876-1956) also translated and imitated European ways of writing and thinking in their popular works, mainly through newspapers, magazines and books.⁵⁰

Beşir Fuad (1852-1887) is regarded as the "first Turkish positivist and naturalist" due to his monographs, especially his monograph of Victor Hugo, which criticizes romanticism and introduces naturalism to Turkish literature for the first time.⁵¹ Baha Tevfik (1884-1914) was a staunch materialist and he translated and elaborated a lot of material on scientific materialism with whose work Şabirî critically engaged.⁵² Unlike Baha, Rıza Tevfik (1868-1949) disseminated modern ideas among his friends, the intellectual and political élite of his time, in a critical manner.⁵³ He was a friend of Şabirî and both of them had served in Damad Farid Pasha's government. He compiled a good dictionary of Western philosophy in Ottoman Turkish.

The admirers of modernity overlooked Islam and its intellectual heritage but a good number of thinkers developed a strong critique of the Western and Eastern proponents of modernity keeping in view exactly the aspect that the

⁵⁰ See: Broockelmann, ed. *History of the Islamic Peoples*, trans. Joel Carmichael and Moshe Perlmann (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), pp. 389-396.

⁵¹ *Victor Hugo* (Victor Hugo, monograph, 1885), *Volter* (Voltaire, monograph putting forward the idea that Voltaire was not an atheist, he was only against Christianity, 1886), *Beşer* (The Human Being, booklet about the physiology of human, 1886), *İntikad* (Literary Criticism, his correspondence with Muallim Naci through letters due to the monograph Victor Hugo, 1887), *Mektubat* (Letters, his intellectual debates with Fazlı Necip due to the monograph Victor Hugo, 1888). See: "Beşir Fuad," in İhsan Işık, *Encyclopedia of Turkish Authors: People of Literature, Culture and Science* (Ankara: Elvan Publishing, 2005).

⁵² With Ahmed Nebil he translated Ludwig Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff Empirisch-naturphilosophische Studien in allgemein-verständlicher Darstellung* (Frankfurt am Main: Meidinger, 1855) from French translation *Le matière et la force as Madde ve Kuvvet* (İstanbul: Dersaadet Kütüphanesi, 1911). For the English translation, see: J.F. Collingwood, *Force and Matter, or Principles of the Natural Order of the Universe* (London: Trübner, 1864). Ernst Heackel's *Vahdet-i Mevcud: Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini* (Monisme) (İstanbul: Dersaadet Kütüphanesi, 1911). For English translation, see: J. Gilchrist, *Monism as Connecting Religion and Science: The Confession of Faith of A Man of Science* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1895).

⁵³ See: S. T. Wasti, "Feylesof Rıza," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 38, Issue 2, 2002, pp. 83-100.

modernists thought to be irrelevant and, which in fact, helped Şabrî to develop his own critique. These thinkers represent an alternative that was inspired by Islamic scholarship. They were considered to be the Ottoman authorities on modernity. Şabrî was particularly impressed with Babanzade Ahmet Naim (1872-1934),⁵⁴ the translator and teacher of Western philosophy and Islamic theology whom he occasionally quotes.⁵⁵ Muḥammad Hamdi Yazır Almalilî (1878-1942)⁵⁶ is indispensable for Şabrî as a source, translator and commentator. The list would not be complete without İsmail Fenni Ertuğrul (1855-1946), a great scholar of modern Western thought and an excellent critic of materialism who is also useful for Şabrî in many ways.⁵⁷ Finally there is a whole plethora of Islamic thinkers of that time who must have contributed to Şabrî's critique of modernity such as Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharî (1879-1952) and Badî' al-Zamān Sa'id al-Nürsî (1878-1960). They were his friends but he does not quote them in his works which does not mean however that they did not influence him in one way or the other.

iii. Translations into Arabic Language

In Egypt most of the translations from European languages, and primarily French, were done in the reign of Muḥammad 'Alî Pāshā (1769-1849) who

⁵⁴ He graduated from Galatasaray High School and the Civil Service School (1894). After working at the Foreign Affairs Translation Department (1911-12), he taught Arabic at Galatasaray High School (1912-14), worked at the Ministry of Education's Translation Association (1914-15), then started teaching philosophy, logic, morality and theology at the Faculty of Literature until it was closed (1915-33). He published most of his articles in reviews such as *Scientific Wealth*, *Sebilürreşad*, *Mecmua-i Ebuzziya* and *İctihad*. Some of his publications regarding modernity include: *Hikmet Dersleri* (1912), *Felsefe Dersleri* (1914-15), *İslâm'da Dâvây-ı Kavmiyyet* (1916), *Ahlâk-ı İslâmiye Dersleri* (1924), *Tevfik Fikret'e Dair* (1918) and *İlmü'n Nefs* (translation from Georges Lespinnasse Fonsegrive). See: "Babanzade Ahmet Naim," in İhsan Işık, *Encyclopedia of Turkish Authors: People of Literature, Culture and Science*.

⁵⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 3, p. 390 and 445.

⁵⁶ He translated *Histoire de la Philosophie* as *Tahlil-i Tarih-i Felsefe-Metalib ve Mezahib* (İstanbul: Haznedar Ofset Matbaası, 1978 [1926]).

⁵⁷ Some of his publications regarding modernity include *Lugatce-i Felsefe* (İstanbul, 1927), *Maddiyyun Mezhebinin Izmihlali* (İstanbul, 1928) which is a refutation of Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff* and on which Şabrî relied a lot; *Kitab-i Izale-i Şukuk* (İstanbul, 1928); and unpublished works such as *Bıyık Filozoflar*, *Hurriyet*, *Stuart Mill'in aynı adlı eserinin*, *Asr-i Hazir Madiyyun Mezhebi*, Paul Jenet; *Hayat ve Madde*; Oliver Lodge which seems to be in Şabrî's possession because he quotes from it. For an overview of his life and works see: Sulayman Hayri Bolay, "İsmail Fanni Ertuğrul (1855-1946)," in *Felsefe Dunyasi*, pp. 12-25.

systematically set out the process of modernization.⁵⁸ He established The Institute of Languages and appointed Rif'at al-Taḥṭāwī (1801-1873) as its head.⁵⁹ Important works in various applied disciplines were rendered into Arabic and Turkish. Al-Taḥṭāwī did remarkable work, but mostly related to natural sciences, military organization and secular laws as well as textbooks for use in educational purposes. As in the Ottoman Turkey, initially, there was no curiosity for philosophy, social sciences and literature which might point again that Muḥammad 'Alī was satisfied with the existing intellectual and social situation in Egypt dominated by Islam. Interest in humanities increased only later on, but there was no systematic state-sponsored translation as in natural sciences. Rather, translations were made according to individual likings and intellectual leanings.

Ṣabrī was expecting to find more Islamic atmosphere in Egypt. He—at least—expected that it would not be as dominated by Western culture and ideas as the capital of the caliphate was. The reforms spearheaded by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā did not impress Ṣabrī because in some ways the revival of the former two was along the lines of the extinct school of the Mu'tazilah thought under the Western influence. The Arab poets such as Jamāl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (1863- 1936), Ma'rūf al-Raṣāf (1875-1945), and Muḥammad Iḥsān al-Muḥāmī, echoed the calls of modern Turkish poets. Scientific materialism was disseminated by many, notably by Shibli Shumayyil (1850-1917),⁶⁰ Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922) and others. Positivism was celebrated by leading thinkers such

⁵⁸ For the details on the first translation movement in Egypt, see Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjamah wa 'l-Harakah al-Thaqāfiyyah fī 'Asr Muḥammad 'Alī*, (Cairo, 1951); J. Heyworth-Dunne, "Printing and Translation under Muhammad 'Alī," in *JRAS* (1940), pp. 325-349; Aḥmad Muḥammad Jādd 'Abd al-Rāziq, *Falsafat al-Mashrū' al-Ḥadāri bayn al-Ihya' al-Islāmī wa 'l-Taḥḍīth al-Gharbī* (Herdon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995), v. 1, pp. 251-266; S. Somekh, "Translations, Modern," in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, eds. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), v. 2, pp. 777-778.

⁵⁹ See: Myriam Salama Carr, "Negotiating Conflict: Rifā'a Rāfi' al-Taḥṭāwī and the translation of the "Other" in Nineteen Century Egypt," in *Social Semiotics*, vol. 17, No. 2 (June 2007), pp. 214-227.

⁶⁰ For a very good study on Shumayyil, see: Susan Leilah Ziadah, *A Radical in his Time: The Thought of Shibli Shumayyil and Arab Intellectual Discourse 1882-1917* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan, 1991).

as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888-1956)⁶¹ and Muḥammad Farīd Wajdi⁶² (1878-1954) and Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd (1905-1993)⁶³. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (1917-2002) was the first Arab existentialist.⁶⁴ Darwinism was strongly advocated in certain circles especially by Salāmah Mūsā (1887-1958)⁶⁵ and Ismā'il Mazhar (1891-1962)⁶⁶. Solutions regarding the problem of women were suggested on the lines of Western models by Qāsim Amīn (1863-1908). 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq (1888-1966) argued that Islam from its early stages separated religion from politics. Interestingly enough, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889-1973) promoted controversial views yet Ṣabrī actually never criticized him.⁶⁷

In addition to these chief proponents of modernity, there was a class of secondary intellectuals who, by the passage of time, attained the status of luminaries so it is difficult to demarcate between them and the leading intellectuals, yet it is important to know that for the purpose of better understanding and analysis. They include Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898-1987), Muḥammad Luṭfi Jumu'ah (1886-1953), Zakī Mubārak (1892-1952), 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām (1895-1959), Aḥmad Ḥassān al-Zayyāt (1885-1968), Isma'il Adham (1911-1940) and many others.

⁶¹ For his views on positivism see: Charles D. Smith, *Islam and the Search for Social order in Egypt: A Biography of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983) and Israel Gershoni "The Return of the East: Muhammad Husayn Haykal's Recantation of Positivism," in Moshe Ma'oz and Ilan Pappé, eds. *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from Within* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997), pp. 21-74.

⁶² 'Alā Aṭlāl al-Madh'hab al-Maddī, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba'ah Dāirat Ma'ārif al-Qarn al-'Ishrin, 1921); Al-Islām fi 'Aṣr al-'Ilm, 3rd. ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, nd.).

⁶³ He wrote *Al-Manṭiq al-Wad'i* (Cairo, 1951) and *Khurāfat al-Mitāfiziqā* (Cairo, 1953). He also co-authored *Qisṣat al-Falsafah al-Ḥadīthah* with Aḥmad Amīn, 2 vols. (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa 'l-Tarjamah wa 'l-Nashr, 1936) from which Ṣabrī quotes extensively.

⁶⁴ He published many works about modern Western thought during the life time of Ṣabrī. Some of them are: *Nitshah* (Cairo, 1939), *Shūbanhawer* (Cairo, 1942), *Ishbanglar* (Cairo, 1945), *Al-Zamān al-Wujūdī* (Cairo, 1945), *Al-Insāniyyah wa 'l-Wujūdiyyah fi 'l-Fikr al-'Arabī* (Cairo, 1947), *Hal Yumkin Qiyām Akhlāq Wujūdiyyah* (Cairo, 1953).

⁶⁵ He authored *Nazarīyyat al-Tatawwur wa Aṣl al-Insān* (Cairo, 1928).

⁶⁶ He translated Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 5 volumes (Cairo, 1927-1929). Apart from that he published *Falsafat al-Ladhdhab wa 'l-Alam* (Cairo, 1936).

⁶⁷ For his changing views on positivism see: Abdelrashid Mahmoudi, *Taha Husain's Education: From the Azhar to the Sorbonne* (Surrey; Curzon, 1998), pp. 164-170 and 216-225.

They disseminated and popularized works and ideas that contribute variously to modernity and the process of modernization and westernization of Egypt.⁶⁸

Apart from these die hard modernists, many Egyptian writers who were professionally interested in Western modern ideas contributed to Ṣabrī's knowledge on modernity. He particularly relied on Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd (1905-1993), Aḥmad Amīn (1886-1954)⁶⁹ and Uthmān Amīn (d. 1977)⁷⁰.

On the other hand, the authors like Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (1886-1969) Maḥmūd 'Abbās al-'Aqqād (1889-1964) who were critical of Western modernity and its proponents in the Muslim world were not only sources of encouragement for Ṣabrī but also of arguments to support his own peculiar view. What is interesting in all these cases is that Ṣabrī was critical of everyone. He never took anyone for granted without having some good reason for accepting or rejecting a particular view.

iv. Modernity as a General Climate in Ṣabrī's Time

By looking at the facts from this point of view and from this time distance that has elapsed from the seventeenth century onwards till the time of Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī, one cannot resist the impression that while Muslims ignored modernity that modernity did not ignore them. They did not approach Europe studiously and scholarly as Europe did approach them, which, in a short span of time, granted Europe the upper hand and opened the door for its political and militarily incursion followed by colonization and occupation. It seems that the Muslims—in this case the Ottomans—did not take modernity seriously until the 1683 defeat of Vienna, the capital of Austro-Hungarian Empire. That defeat clearly exposed the weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire vis-à-vis Europe. More importantly, it ultimately determined two momentous points which still prevail in the relations

⁶⁸ See: Israel Gershoni, "The Evolution of National Culture in Modern Egypt," in *Poetics Today*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer, 1992), p. 332.

⁶⁹ His name appears on Zakī's *Qiṣṣat al-Falsafah al-Ḥadīthah* in the capacity of the head of the Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa 'l-Tarjama wa 'l-Nashr.

⁷⁰ He wrote a book titled: *Dikārt* 3rd ed. (Cairo: Maktabah Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, 1953) which Ṣabrī quoted a lot.

between the world of Islam and the West; the first was that the westerners would, from then on, dictate the rules of the game in the relations between the two entities in political, economic and military aspects, rather intellectually and culturally as well. This profoundly changed the situation in the world because Europe, for the first time after the collapse of the Roman Empire, assumed the leadership of the world. The second equally significant point, which perhaps needs to be emphasized more, was that the reforms in the Muslim World had to be carried out according to the Western standards, in other words: modernization ultimately meant westernization.

The Ottomans were of the view that the cause of defeat in Vienna was merely a military problem, and once it is solved and their military reformed, they would become safe from the "infidels" as they used to call the Europeans. For that reason, they induced thorough reforms in the military. Oddly enough, British, Prussian and French advisors were brought in. Most importantly a series of schools teaching everything from mathematics to medicine were set up to train the new officers. The *nizam-i-jedid* was established using European weapons, training and, interestingly enough, uniforms.

During the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (1785-1839), the government was overhauled and redesigned on European models. European civil clothing styles were also imported and the Sultan and the élites abandoned the fez and turban. The first Turkish newspaper, an official government publication, was also published during this time which announced a new period of mass media, a phenomenon not known before. This period of reform continued after the death of Mahmud II in 1839.

In order to compete with the Europeans, the Ottomans borrowed money to develop their infrastructure, building railroads, telegraph lines, and modern ports. Ironically, modernization got them further under the control of the Europeans, who provided the loans. Due to acute financial problems, the Empire was swamped with British, French, and Austrian businessmen and administrators who came to reform and rebuild the economy. The period of *Tanzimat* (1838-1876)

witnessed great changes. During that period, after the Crimean war (1854–1856) a national bank was created, the tax system was revised and strengthened, the law was altered to emulate the Napoleonic Code, a public education system based on that of the French was created, the Orient Express railroad was constructed and other railroads were built that travelled along the coast of Anatolia and into the Balkans. Interestingly enough, when railways were built, largely by Europeans, they linked to the coast, not to the capital. This clearly indicated that this was not done for the welfare of the Ottoman Empire but for the ultimate benefit of Europe.

Politically, a constitution was adopted and a parliament created and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (1842-1918) became the leader of an Ottoman constitutional monarchy resembling those in Europe. Although he abolished it, yet under the pressure of the Young Turks he had to reintroduce it again in 1908. The Young Turks were behind the emergence of a new Ottoman nationalism which appeared throughout Anatolia, and for the first time the Empire had a middle class. Everything resembled the situation in Europe and it seemed as though it might be possible for the Empire to turn its decline around.

As the Ottoman Empire was liquidated, Turkish nationalists under Muṣṭafā Kemal Atatürk (1880–1938) created a new state in Anatolia and Thrace. Atatürk embarked on an aggressive campaign of westernization. In a couple of years he secularized education, ordered men to wear European hats instead of the fez, closed down the dervish convents, instituted a new act on civil marriage, changed the alphabet from Arabic to Latin characters⁷¹ and worked to give women the right to vote. Most Turks are still proud of Atatürk's westernizing and nationalist legacy, although there have been some amendments to its more extreme aspects. The direction of modernization during Atatürk was no secret anymore; it was not towards the teachings that incepted in Makka and Madinah, but, to put it bluntly,

⁷¹ All these acts were promulgated into laws and they have been adopted on the following dates respectively: March 3, 1924; November 25, 1925; November 30, 1925; February 17, 1926 and November 1, 1928.

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towards the latest developments of London and Paris. Perhaps no previous reformer dared to profess it as openly as Atatürk did.⁷²

Since Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī spent the other half of his life in Egypt where he got more actively involved in discussing modernity and its implications on the Muslim faith and intellect, some light should be thrown on its general atmosphere as well for the same purpose of learning more about the influences that contributed in shaping his perception about modernity.

The reforms which the Ottomans started, affected Egypt as well because it was a constituent part of the Empire. As a result, the process of modernization was more or less similar to that of the Ottomans with minor differences in strategy.⁷³

The main initiator of modernization in Egypt was Muḥammad 'Alī Pāshā (1769-1849), an Ottoman army officer of Albanian origin, but it was Khedive Ismail (d. 1879), one of his successors, who took the process of modernization drastically forward with a clear emphasis on the import of Western ideas, methods and techniques.

The modernization of Egypt, like that of the Ottoman Empire, naturally followed from the originally limited policy of military reform. However,

a fighting force required auxiliary services which in turn required a special technically trained personnel; this expensively elaborate establishment could not be kept without an expansion of the public revenue; the revenue could not be expanded without a rise in the taxable income of the community; production could not be increased without technical improvements in agriculture and industry; none of these requirements could be met without a further personnel of Western-educated civil servants and economic experts; and the requisite intake of civilian cadets could only be secured by providing a general preparatory education on the same model as that utilized for the education of military cadets.⁷⁴

⁷² The standard work on secularization in Turkey that has become almost a classic is Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964).

⁷³ For a good description of the process of Modernization in Egypt, see the classic work of P.J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969) especially pp. 49-125.

⁷⁴ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, a new edition revised and abridged by the author and Jane Caplan (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972 reprinted in 1979), p. 427.

What both Ottomans and Egyptians ignored was the consequences of industrialization. They simply wanted to "import the industrial revolution from abroad, uncreate it like a piece of machinery, and set it in motion"⁷⁵ without thinking that it would, actually, create new social, cultural, intellectual and religious considerations. Arnold Toynbee regards the process of modernization in the Muslim World as the latest confirmation of his proposition that "one thing leads to another" in cultural encounters.⁷⁶

As demonstrated, the process of modernization was in full sway by the birth of Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī in 1869 encompassing key spheres of Muslim life. Initially, the Muslims willingly imitated the process of modernization in Europe militarily, industrially, politically and economically but later on, unintentionally and as a part and parcel of the modernization package, socially, culturally and intellectually as well. The Muslims lost their indigenous vision and whenever that vision surfaced, it was mercilessly suppressed and dismissed as retrogressive. On the other side, no alternative was offered except the blind following of western modernity as a pattern and norm of future scientific advancement and intellectual progress.

Having experienced all these dramatic changes, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the foremost Muslim thinkers, notably Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh had already set out the target for modern Muslim thought in the twentieth century and epitomized its core objective and concern in an often heard and read phrase "to catch up with the scientific and civilizational achievements of the West".

Hence, in addition to what has been described up till now, Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī, in fact, fully lived and experienced the pros and cons of modernity as it became a general atmosphere in all major areas of life and as it entirely penetrated and encompassed what had been relevant at that crucial point of time. Modernity was not, therefore, limited to books, newspapers and a few journals. Rather it was a

⁷⁵ Quoted in E. S. Mason, "The Planning and Development," in *Scientific American*, (September 1963), p. 235, quoted by Toynbee, p. 429.

⁷⁶ Toynbee, p. 429.

general climate of the time, which of course provided Ṣabrī with deeper insights into its reality. Beside the written sources therefore, his perception of modernity was ultimately conditioned and shaped by the general climate of the time he lived in and the climate which was imbibed with Western ideas and ideals. He did not treat it as abstract ideas through translated books like his predecessors Al-Ghazālī and Al-Rāzī did, but he experienced its practical consequences and applications even in his daily life. While they encountered a dead tradition, Ṣabrī encountered an energetic innovation and blooming modernization that engulfed not only the Muslim World but the whole planet as well. In that sense indeed his task was more challenging and demanding and the results of his intellectual engagement more pertinent to Muslim intellectuals in the contemporary world.

PART I

Modernity: Concepts and Components

PART I

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Chapter I

Materialism

One of the strange developments in the late Ottoman Empire was the emergence of popular materialism among Muslim intellectuals such as Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik.¹ They adopted the 19th century theories of German *Vulgarmaterialismus* from the post-Ludwig Feuerbach period of works² relying heavily on French translations of German materialists such as Ludwig Büchner (1724-1822), Ernest Haeckel (1834-1919), Carl Vogt (1817-1895) and Jacob Moleschott (1822-1893) along with French authors such as Claude Bernard (1813-1878) and Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931).³ The question of why materialism spread so rapidly among certain groups of Ottoman intellectuals still remains intriguing. It has recently been suggested that these elitist groups wanted to save the society through entirely new designs that would carefully reconstruct the society and integrate it in the European civilization.⁴ How interested the Turks were in materialism is best illustrated by a widely quoted passage from Charles MacFarlane:

It was long since I had seen such a collection of downright materialism. A young Turk, seemingly about twenty years of age, was sitting cross-legged in a corner of the room, reading that manual of atheism, the 'Système de la Nature!' Another of the students showed his proficiency in French and philosophy, by quoting passages from Diderot's *Jaques le Fataliste*... Cabanés's *Rapport de Physique et du Morale de l'Homme* occupied a

¹ For a good study on these three Ottoman materialists, see: M. Sükrü Hanioğlu, "Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art," in Elisabeth Özdalga, ed. *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2005), pp. 29-116. Interestingly, he does not treat Şabîrî's response. Regarding the history of materialism in Ottoman-Turkish thought, see: Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi* (İstanbul: Ülken Yayınları, 1992), pp. 233-256; Mehmet Akgün, *Materyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi ve İlk Etkileri* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1988); Atilla Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006).

² See: M. Sait Özervarlı, "Alternative Approaches to Modernization in the Late Ottoman Empire: İzmirli İsmail Hakkî's Religious Thought against Materialist Scientism," in *Int. J. Middle East Studies*, (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2007), vol. 39, p. 80. For more details on scientific or vulgar materialism, see: Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany*, (Dordrecht/Boston: D. Riddel, 1977).

³ See: Özervarlı, p. 80.

⁴ See: M. Sükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 305.

conspicuous place on the shelves. I no longer wondered it should be commonly said that every student who came out of Galata Serai, after keeping the full term, came out always a materialist...⁵

While attempting to analyze Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī's response to materialism it is perhaps instructive to note that his usage of the original terminology in Arabic language along with its French or English equivalent may help us in acquiring deeper understanding of his discourses.⁶ This is so because his terminology might carry crucial connotation in Arabic language and Islamic scholarship that may not be present in the Western languages and its scholarship. Attempting to understand the nuances of these terminological meanings is important in crystallizing conceptions and ideas that are crucial for both Islamic and Western positions. Moreover, this must be considered as Ṣabrī's attempt to develop independent Islamic terminology that is not only understandable for a Muslim but that is also qualitatively useable within the Islamic framework of scholarship and properly integrative into its thought. The methodological training which Ṣabrī received traditionally stressed on the etymological meanings of the words before they were terminologically treated. That school of thought insisted on the intrinsic relation between the word and the thing that it points to.⁷ This, however, differs from some linguists' point of view who contended that "*al-asmā' lā tu'allal*", namely, that the names/terms cannot be rationalized. That is why it is not surprising to see Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī using the original terminologies of modernity between brackets and giving its Arabic and sometimes Turkish match usually investigating which

⁵ *Turkey and its Destiny: The Results of Journey made in 1847 and 1848 to Examine into the State of that Country* (London: John Murray, 1850), v. 2, pp. 270-271.

⁶ French authors were widely rendered into Arabic and Ottoman Turkish in the beginning of modern translations but it was slowly substituted by English after the First World War. See: S. Somekh, "Translations, Modern," in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (London: Routledge, 1998), v. 2, p. 777.

⁷ One of the interesting chapters of *Ilm al-Kalām* is the relation between *al-Isim*, *al-Musammā* and *al-Tasmiyah*. For a good discussion on this issue, see: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-Asna fi Sharh Asma' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, Arabic text, edited with introduction, Fadlou A. Shehadi (Beyrouth: Dar El-Machreq Editeurs, 1971), pp. 17-35.

rendering is more appropriate and useful and for what reasons.⁸ The terminology, of course, always gives a glimpse of deeper meaning at stake. Those who are involved in philosophical studies can appreciate this precision but those who are not will probably dismiss it as some kind of *déformation professionnelle*. Nevertheless, what is important for us here is that this type of precision, even in smallest details, tells about the utmost seriousness and diligence employed by Şabrî in his discourses about knowledge in general and modernity in particular.

Having said this, Şabrî translates materialism as *al-māddiyyah* and rarely uses its European version within brackets or otherwise. By his time, Muslim scholars widely used and accepted the Arabic term and Şabrî seems quite comfortable with its application. Apart from this, he uses *al-falsafah al-māddiyyah*⁹ or materialistic philosophy and *al-madh'hab al-māddî*¹⁰ or the materialistic school. That this term had already been used in the classical Muslim sources must have been a serving condition.¹¹ All these circumstances helped sanction its usage within the modern Muslim discourse. Hence, by applying the term of *al-māddiyyah*, Şabrî consciously tries to establish continuity between the past and present and struggles to set up a connection between the traditional Islamic and modern Western intellectual discourses. Exclusively using *materialism* in any European language would not have produced the same effect.

Etymologically, as the word itself signifies, materialism refers to matter and—in common jargon—it is used in a derogatory sense as “obsession with material possessions, bodily comforts, etc. while neglecting spiritual values”.¹² As a term:

materialism is a set of related theories which hold that all entities and processes are composed of—or are reducible to—matter, material forces or

⁸ Şabrî's discussion about the correct translation of positivism into Ottoman Turkish *al-İthbātīyyah* or Egyptian *al-Wad'iyyah* may be given as an example. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1 pp. 147-8, and also see: chapter III on this work for his perception of positivism.

⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 385.

¹⁰ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 416.

¹¹ The *Mutakallimūn*'s discussions on the issue of matter and materialism can easily be found in the chapters on *Qidam al-'Ālam* or the eternity of world. For Şabrî's evaluation of classical *Kalāmī* critique of the Greek philosophy, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 112-113.

¹² See: “Materialism,” in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 4th. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 768.

physical processes. All events and facts are explainable, actually or in principle, in terms of body, material objects or dynamic material changes or movements. In general, the metaphysical theory of materialism entails the denial of the reality of spiritual beings, consciousness and mental or psychic states or processes, as ontologically distinct from, or independent of material changes or processes. Since it denies the existence of spiritual beings or forces, materialism typically is allied with atheism or agnosticism.¹³

i. Materialism in Antiquity and Middle Ages

Historically, as a typical philosophical trend, materialism is not entirely a modern phenomenon neither in the Muslim nor in the Western scholarship. Perhaps, it is the oldest philosophical tradition in the Western civilization going back even to the pre-Socratic ancient Ionians who assumed the existence of primordial mater consisting of four elements namely; earth, water, air and fire, from which, they held, the universe developed. Leucippus (480–420 B.C.E.) invented the atomic theory of matter which was subsequently worked out and formalized into a system of atomistic materialism by Democritus (460–370 B.C.E.) who is regarded as the founder of materialism proper or its “great grandfather”¹⁴ to use Şabri’s words. Epicurus (341–270 B.C.E.) integrated it into his physics arguing that ultimate reality consisted of invisible and indivisible bits of free-falling matter called atoms randomly colliding in the void. It was on these classic lines that the Roman poet Lucretius (circa 95–55 B.C.E.) lucidly explained this trend in his famous philosophical piece of literature, *De Rerum Natura*.¹⁵

¹³ George J. Stack, “Materialism,” in Edward Craig, ed. *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 633. For some classic definitions of materialism, see: Craig Ruie, *Materialism as a Philosophical Conception of the Universe or Hume Vindicated: Grecian Period and Seventeenth Century Period*, (Montreal: E. M. Renouf, 1905), pp. 5-7. Maurice Mandelbaum in his *History, Man and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth Century Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p. 22 regards materialist anyone who holds one of the following categories (1) that there is an independently existing world, (2) that human beings, like all other objects, are material entities, (3) that the human mind does not exist as an entity distinct from the human body, and (4) that there is no God (nor any other nonhuman being) whose mode of existence is not that of material entities.

¹⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 295.

¹⁵ See: W. H. D. Rouse, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1975). For a comprehensive view on materialism in this critical period of Western thought, see the classical work of Frederick Albert Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*

Much knowledge about materialism has already been accumulated in the classic Muslim scholarship on Greek philosophy before the encounter between Islam and modernity even took place.¹⁶ A noteworthy point here is that the Muslim accounts of Greek philosophy were so extensive and detailed that the early Orientalists claimed that there was no such thing called as *Philosophia Islamica*. The sole Muslim contribution to the study of Greek philosophy, they contended, was a mere rendering of Greek philosophy into Arabic while Islamic philosophy was no more than Greek philosophy "clothed in Arabic language."¹⁷

However, by the passage of time, this claim, which has already been refuted in the circles of Orientalists themselves, may be significant for our purpose and it may be approached from a slightly different angle, namely; that Muslim thinkers tried to present Greek philosophy comprehensively and intelligibly for the Muslim reader. This fact is a point of agreement and as such should remain intact. But, it may assume yet another dimension, namely, since the classic Muslim theologians and philosophers were well acquainted with the philosophical heritage of Greece in general and materialism in particular, and since the works of classic Muslim scholars on them were treated as textbooks by later generations of Muslim students, there can be no doubt that Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī came across the long discussions which were present in these books while still trying to get hold of Islamic scholarship, not to talk about his mission to follow the latest developments in Europe's intellectual history, which of course, further sharpened his vision and perception of modern materialism. Ṣabrī is aware of this and he invites us to compare between the contributions of the classic and contemporary 'ulamā' regarding the Western intellectual heritage especially materialism and positivism.¹⁸ And, finally, as an ardent student of *Kalām*, *Hikmah* and *Falsafah*, unknowingly of

(Iserlohn: J. Baedeker, 1865); trans. E. C. Thomas as *The History of Materialism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1925), especially the first section titled "Materialism in Antiquity", pp. 1-125.

¹⁶ See for instance: Al-Shahristānī, *Al-Milal wa 'l-Niḥal*, ed. Amīr 'Alī Mahna and 'Alī Ḥasan Fā'ūr, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1993), pp. 369-484.

¹⁷ In his lectures, Dāfūd Santilana argued that the Islamic philosophical thought may be divided into Greek schools of thought. See: *Al-Madhāhib al-Yūnāniyyah al-Falsafiyyah fi 'l-'Ālam al-Islāmiyy*, ed. Muḥammad Jalāl Sharaf (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabiyyah, 1981).

¹⁸ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 222.

what would become a need of his time, Şabrî, by sticking to traditional Islamic scholarship and especially through *al-'ulûm al-'aqliyyah* or rational disciplines, prepared himself for the encounter with modernity.

On the other hand, this should not be understood as an attempt to prove that Muşţafâ Şabrî already knew modern materialism even before it was imported to the Orient. This is only to show that the very idea of materialism had not been completely strange for him. Even if he had known the Greek materialism in its most hidden details it does not give us the right to claim that he knew modern materialism as well. Although there is a great deal of resemblance between the Greek and modern materialism as an overall concept, it must be borne in mind that besides its Greek roots, modern materialism grew out of a peculiar intellectual climate, philosophical ambience and most importantly, brilliant development of science that gave it its defining and distinguishing features. Therefore, Şabrî's knowledge of ancient Greek materialism represented in the Islamic rational heritage may be regarded only as a helpful tool and a preliminary introduction and not as full-fledged understanding that may not need any updating, improvement or amendments. The great thing about Muşţafâ Şabrî was that he did not allow himself to commit a widespread mistake, which some scholars actually committed, by simply applying ancient philosophical and religious concepts on their modern equivalents just because they shared a common name.¹⁹ He was conscious of the developments in Europe, because its forceful drive forward could not have come out of the worn-out Greek ideas without being significantly revitalized. In this regard he realizes the importance of what he terms as *talabuhq al-afkâr wa taqaddum al-zamân* or the ideas being fertilized by the passage of time.²⁰

Şabrî seems to be of the view that materialism started growing in the West after the Middle Ages mainly as a response to disproportionality between this

¹⁹ While exploring early Muslim scholarship on Europe, Bernard Lewis contends that certain Muslim scholars, such as Evli Celebi, used the old Muslim accounts of Christianity to present the early Modern Europe. He calls it as "timelessness" of Muslim thinking which in fact means that Muslim scholars did not have sense for time. See: "Muslim Scholarship about the West," in *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982), pp. 135-171.

²⁰ *Marwîf al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 225.

world and the other world, material and spiritual and rational and irrational in the Christian teachings. Some of these teachings were so irrational, propagating and emphasizing extreme spiritual and other-worldly side that they almost neglected the mundane and material side of this life.²¹ The revolutionary scientific discoveries made by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) in astronomy,²² Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), and Galileo Galilei's (1564-1642) theories, were in fact "scientific material discoveries" that shook the essence of Christianity and gradually gave science advantage over it. Science, in opposition to religion, focused on the material which it could ascertain by physical senses and experimentation. And, from that time on, the importance of the material was increasing at the expense of the spiritual and even the rational in the Western world so much so that Şabrî notes that "the minds of westerners and their followers among us are so much immersed in the matter that there, in their minds, is disorder which is difficult to be cured."²³

ii. Materialism and Modern Philosophers

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was perhaps the first and the most influential philosopher in the modern times who put materialism on the track and thought that it deserved to be seriously considered. In Şabrî's own words, "he prefers Democritus over Plato and Aristotle, and places him at the top position among the ancient Greek philosophers for his views on the importance of nature."²⁴ Bacon tried to develop a methodology to explore the material world directly and immediately rather than indulging in the investigation of teleological causes as he thought was the case in religion. Şabrî even reproduces Bacon's saying which became popular in the eighteen century, which compares the futility of teleological

²¹ See the chapter on comparison between Christianity and Islam in *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 15-67.

²² Copernicus main contribution was the abolition of geocentric system of Universe as suggested by Claudius Ptolemy. Cf. *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 254.

²³ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 61.

²⁴ Ibid., v. 2, pp. 294-295.

causes to the fertility of nuns who devoted their lives to prayer in the sanctuaries.²⁵ By applying precise material measures he tried to prove the fallibility of reason which carried in itself thick layers of imaginations that cannot be cleaned and exterminated but by upholding the material and sensual findings.²⁶

René Descartes²⁷ (1596-1650), although a rationalist, contributed to materialism as well because he introduced dualism in modern thought thus giving legality to the material along with the rational without being able to actually reconciling them in a proper manner.²⁸ As a consequence of this dualism, modern philosophy became divided, which immensely contributed to the independent emergence and development of materialism as opposed to rationalism. However, Muṣṭafā Şabrî does not seem to pay attention to this fact and continues to glorify Descartes throughout his works as if Descartes did not contribute to the materialistic notions in the modern thought at all. Even if he himself did not contribute to that directly, then the school of thought that issued from his writings and that attempted to explain the motion in the material world and the mind-body relation in totally mechanistic ways certainly did. But, that is another thing. However, it is important to note that Şabrî was aware of the intellectual antagonism between different schools of thought in the West, especially between its rational and empirical trends, and in this respect, he may be considered as a rationalist thinker but not in the strict Western understanding of the term.

²⁵ See the footnote in Ibid., v. 2, p. 462.

²⁶ It seems that he agrees with the long quotation of Aḥmad Amîn and Zakî Najîb Maḥfûz to this effect. See: Ibid., v. 2 p. 142; Compare it with the opening lines of Bacon's *Natural History for the Building Up of Philosophy*, 1609, 19th Century English edition: "But the Natural History which has been accumulated hitherto may seem abundant on casual inspection, while in reality it is sketchy and useless, and not even of the kind I am seeking. For it has not been stripped of fables and ravings, and it rushes into antiquity, philology and superfluous narratives, neglectful and high-handed in matters of weight, over-scrupulous and immoderate in matters of no importance"

²⁷ İbrahim Edhem translated Descartes' *Discourse de la méthode* into Turkish as *Usul Hakkında Nutuk*, (İstanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1894).

²⁸ On the common conception that Descartes' philosophy leads to materialism, see: A. Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1957), pp. 138, 213, 225 and 237. Robert F. McRae states that even some of Descartes' contemporaries were of the same view. See: "Cartesian Matter and the Concept of World," in Georges J.D. Moyal, ed. *René Descartes: Critical Assessments* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 150.

Thomas Hobbes' (1588-1679) contribution to the materialistic interpretation of nature and human nature is undisputed.²⁹ Şabrî briefly but harshly comments on Hobbes contention that "nothing exists except atoms in vacuum"³⁰ by saying: "Hobbes, who is one of the atheists and who upholds the rational way, did not have the intellect to recognize how to uphold the (correct) rationality."³¹ Although Şabrî does not directly discuss Hobbes, yet the idea that there is nothing that exists except atoms in the vacuum is widely discussed elsewhere and as suggested and elaborated by other philosophers. What is significant here, however, is that during revision of the modern Western thought, Şabrî pointed to Hobbes and to the crux of his philosophy which evidently carries strong materialistic connotation and that he related him to the overall atmosphere of materialism in the modern age.

Psychologically, according to Şabrî, materialism found its protection in John Locke's (1632-1704) view which suggests that humans were born without innate ideas,³² and that human thoughts were no more than images impressed on the mind's *tabula rasa*; not from the immaterial but from the material world only.³³ This also went against Cartesian view that humans were born with innate ideas and that these ideas were principle source for knowledge. Şabrî considered this contention of Locke as the weakest argument against rationality.³⁴ He allied himself with Descartes in this case due to the Islamic conception of *al-Fiṭrah* which suggests a form of innate knowledge that every human is born with.³⁵

²⁹ For a comprehensive analysis of Hobbes' materialism and responses to it, see: Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

³⁰ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 142. Sabri's source is *Qiṣṣat al-Falsafah al-Ḥadīthah* (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa 'l-Tarjamah wa 'l-Nashr, 1936), p. 251.

³¹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 142.

³² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 143. Locke presented his views on ideas in his famous *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: William Tegg & Co., Cheapside, 1849).

³³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 144. On the connection between Locke and French Materialism, see: John W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

³⁴ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 150.

³⁵ *Fiṭrat Allah allatī faṭar al-nās 'alayha*. Al-Qur'ān: Al-Rūm, 30.

In his physics, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) carried out Galileo's and Bacon's mission using Descartes' rational tools. He developed purely "mechanical explanation of the universe which apparently did not contradict his belief in monotheism."³⁶ However, his physical and mechanical interpretation gave the materialists a scientific proof for their materialistic philosophy which in the end denies everything beyond material world in spite of the author's belief in God.³⁷ Şabrî observes that materialists hold that "this mechanism and this system stem from the nature of things and that it is not forced on the things from outside, as the Muslim theologians hold".³⁸ This mechanism, according to Şabrî, inevitably leads to determinism which is not that determinism so often spoken about in the books of theology but rather the non-religious material one.³⁹ This fact is unknown to many materialists in the Muslim world who accuse the Muslims of believing in God who had already determined their faith but who, at the same time, do not see the deterministic nature of the school of thought to which they subscribe.⁴⁰

Şabrî is also of the view that materialism was further boosted by yet another scientific theory, the Darwinian Theory, which provided some materialists with a strong argument that there was no need for creation but that life evolved organically from simple to complex species. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on Darwinism.⁴¹

iii. Popular Materialism

Muṣṭafā Şabrî is familiar with the influential work of Julien de la Mettrie (1709-51), *L'homme Machine*.⁴² He summarizes this frankly anti-Cartesian and anti-

³⁶ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 292.

³⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 361.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 190.

³⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 194.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 189. The issue of determinism and human freedom in classical Islamic thought with some modern implications Şabrî discussed in his *Mawqif al-Bashar Taht Sulṭān al-Qadar* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafiyyah wa Maktabātuhā, h. 1352). For a Turkish translation, see: İsa Doğan, *İnsan ve Kader* (İstanbul: Kültür Basın Yayın Birliği, 1989).

⁴¹ See: the chapter on "Darwinism", pp. 119-142.

⁴² (Leyden: Elie Luzac Fils, 1748), trans. Gertrude Carman Bussey, *Man a Machine* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1912).

religious polemic whose very title was sufficient to provoke any man devoted to religion in the following words:

the universe *en masse* is governed by natural laws which are immutable. What is perceived of it as order is deemed accidental, without being conceived by a designer or volition of any decree. Thus, [it is understood that there is] no God, no interference of His in the universe; no prophethood, no miracles, no life after death and even no life in itself, and no soul. Man is [therefore understood to be] a mechanical instrument and a body which moves without choice; without being different from other moving bodies.⁴³

Quoting Montesquieu (1689-1755), Şabrî responds: "how unlikely it is to have a blind force creating rational human beings."⁴⁴

Muṣṭafā Şabrî is also aware of the importance of Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789) among the modern materialists but it appears that he never referred to his defining work of *Système de la nature*.⁴⁵ In spite of that, the ideas suggested by this work such as materialistic interpretation of nature and man, the subsequent denial of anything beyond matter, the dismissal of religion as mere superstitions, utilitarian ethics and politics are all discussed in Şabrî's work. Those ideas were already shared by many in d'Holbach's time and his contribution may be seen as the systemization of these ideas in one huge compendium. The same may be applied for the famous co-editor of the *Encyclopédie*, Denis Diderot (1713-1784).

Ludwig Büchner⁴⁶ was perhaps the most popular materialist of the nineteenth century; so much so that Şabrî calls him as their *al-Imām*⁴⁷ or leader in the West and as *al-Ustādh* or teacher of educated élites in Turkey such as Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik and in Egypt such as Ismā'îl Adham⁴⁸

⁴³ *Maṣwif al-'Aql*, v. 1 pp. 145-147.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 1 p. 147.

⁴⁵ First published in Amsterdam, 1770; trans. H.D. Robinson as *The System of Nature* (Boston, MA, 1868).

⁴⁶ For a short biography, life, importance and list of works, see: Michael Heidelberger, "Büchner," in Edward Craig, ed. *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1998), v. 2, pp. 48-51.

⁴⁷ *Maṣwif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 415; See also: *Ibid.* v. 2, pp. 382, 403, 404, 427.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 327.

(1911-1940) and Farīd Wajdī⁴⁹ not to exclude Shiblī Shumayyil, a Lebanese Christian, himself a follower of materialism and one of its strong promoters in the Muslim world who translated *Der Fortschritt in Natur und Geschichte im Lichte der Darwinschen Theorie*⁵⁰ in the same year it was published in German. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil translated it in Turkish from its French translation *Le matière et la force* as *Madde ve Kuvvet*.⁵¹ It is relevant to know what parts of Büchner's thought Şabrī is interested in. Şabrī starts with Büchner's criticism of Schopenhauer's contention that there is a "spiritual force" behind this universe. On the contrary, life, according to Büchner, is only the sum total of chemical processes of the complex forces within nature and/or it is an example of mechanical movements which can be explained according to the known natural laws. Şabrī carefully emphasizes a point of Büchner in which he argues that whoever tries to explain nature in some other way is unreasonable and superstitious. Nature is self-sufficient and it is in no need of any external forces or exceptional laws. For Şabrī the repercussions of this view on religion are obvious. The case of human body can be explained in similar terms; its internal processes are purely chemical and mechanic and there is no need for any extra-natural interpretation. However, if we are not able to explain some process in nature according to this, it does not call for an extra-natural explanation. It simply points to the shortage of scientific knowledge. And by the progress of knowledge this shortage will be covered and our knowledge subsequently adjusted according to the new findings.⁵²

In response to this exposition, Şabrī asks two simple questions which perhaps determine all his discussions with Büchner: How long do we have to wait for new scientific discoveries? And even if we explain nature as mechanism, we have to ask who originated this mechanism in the first place.⁵³ The energy in nature may seem immaterial even for Büchner but he reduced it to motion and

⁴⁹ Ibid., v. 2 p. 352.

⁵⁰ (Stuttgart: 1884). *Sharḥ Būkhmar 'alā Madh'hab al-Darwīn* (Alexandria: Maṭba'ah al-Maḥrūsah, 1884). Cf. *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 9, footnote no. 1.

⁵¹ (İstanbul: Dersaadet Kütüphanesi, 1911).

⁵² See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 147.

⁵³ See: Ibid., v. 1, pp. 146-147.

then he further reduced motion to matter.⁵⁴ Nature does not accept creation from outside; rather, it accepts internal gradual organic evolution based on cause and effect that continued for millions of years⁵⁵ which in turn, although uniform, is without will, order and final cause.⁵⁶ Şabrî is keen to show inconsistency here between Büchner and another prominent materialist, his close friend Jacob Moleschott,⁵⁷ who in his opening lectures in Tübingen asked "the audience not to consider him so blind as to deprive nature of will."⁵⁸ The materialists, according to Şabrî, abandoned their position about the uniform order in nature later because it led to the existence of an intelligent designer⁵⁹ which would, of course, vindicate the religious position. In order to avoid such a situation, they interpreted nature as chaos, which was ordering itself according to chance,⁶⁰ and subsequently, in this way, they eliminated the need for a Creator.⁶¹ The order in matter and nature was not necessary because what happened according to chance could not be necessary.⁶² Likewise, order was not made by man; he simply discovered it. Who made it then? The materialists' answer is that the particles of atom made it. But if man could not have made the order and if he is the most developed thing in nature then how could these small particles have done it? Obviously, the materialists' explanation for the existence of order in the world does not satisfy Şabrî.⁶³ He points to the contradiction of the chief materialistic argument against miracles which is the disruption of the order. But that argument loses all meaningfulness after the materialists deny any system and order in nature.⁶⁴ The most complicated result

⁵⁴ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 81.

⁵⁵ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 396-397.

⁵⁶ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 382-383 and 385-386.

⁵⁷ His most popular works are: *Die Lehre der Nahrungsmittel* (1850) and *Der Kreislauf des Lebens* (1852).

⁵⁸ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 382.

⁵⁹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 415.

⁶⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 416.

⁶¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 425.

⁶² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 439.

⁶³ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 442.

⁶⁴ Ibid., v. 3, p. 39. For a detailed discussion on the issue of miracles, see the chapter on Prophethood and Miracles of this dissertation, pp. 254-274.

achieved by this materialistic evolution was the human mind.⁶⁵ The paradox for Ṣabrī was how could matter which did not contain reason evolve into a human being with reason?⁶⁶

In this regard, Ṣabrī also discusses Karl Vogt's notorious analogy between brain and thought and digestive system:⁶⁷

It should not be understood that materialists who negate metaphysics do not negate reason [also]. And the negation of it being a special energy [*al-quwwah*] different from [other] natural energies does not necessitate the negation of its existence altogether. They [materialists] hold that perception is a function of the brain and its natural product same as the bile is the product of liver and urine of the kidney.⁶⁸

He painstakingly struggles to reply this issue and disperse the doubts raised therewith:

Our view is that thought is not a product of the brain which is materialistic existent, although the existence of the brain is a normal precondition for the existence of thought. For if thought is an effect of the brain and its product, then it would be materialistic in nature [also] like the brain, and it would be related to one of senses like bile and urine are. Hence, thought is not a substance nor is it any of the known material energies, although natural existence is confined to matter and its known energies. Therefore, it necessarily follows that thought is not an existent according to the percept of natural sciences because it cannot be detected by any one of the senses.⁶⁹

Ṣabrī introduces Ernest Haeckel (1834-1919) as "the founder of Monism *Madhhab al-Wahdiyyah*."⁷⁰ To him Haeckel struggled with the "uncomfortable idea" of the previous materialists that the order of nature is a product of "chance and chaos."⁷¹ Haeckel also tried to give answers to bewildering questions of "the origin, force, movement, sense and all perfect qualities of the high beings" and

⁶⁵ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 430-431.

⁶⁶ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 432.

⁶⁷ His most popular works are *Physiologische Briefe* of (1844-1847) and *Kohlerglaube und Wissenschaft* (1855).

⁶⁸ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 161

⁶⁹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 161 See also: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 313, 345, 365 and the brain as the product of chance over millions of years, pp. 400-401 and as the most complicated result of chance, see: Ibid. v. 2, p. 431.

⁷⁰ Ibid., v. p. 429. In at least two footnotes he explains the difference in spelling between his name and Hegel's and between the Persian *ga* and the Egyptian colloquial *gim*. See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 429 footnote no. 1 and p. 442 also.

⁷¹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 429.

hence suggested that "in each particle of atom of matter reside principles of the great spirit such as sense, inclination and feeling."⁷² Ṣabrī systematically responds to Haeckel following Sir Oliver Lodge's critique:⁷³ (1) the attributes of knowledge and will that Haeckel wants to ascribe to the particles of atom do not exist in them but exist in bodies that are a combination of these particles. Knowledge and will are only empirically provable in bodies; not in particles. In what may seem like the style of Mutakallimīn, he continues: "it follows that what is in parts *al-ajzā* must be there in the whole *al-kull* but it does not follow that what is in the whole must be in the parts for the possibility that it is the characteristic of combination of parts."⁷⁴ (2) If particles have all those attributes that means that our abilities are less than the abilities of these particles.⁷⁵ (3) It also follows that man does not enjoy any freedom or will.⁷⁶ Furthermore, (4) the opposites within the atom neutralize each other and achieve balance and thus cannot move the body.⁷⁷ (5) And finally: "in order to explain life and mind and consciousness by means of matter, all that is done is to assume that matter possesses these unexplained attributes [...] but at any rate, as it stands, it is not science and its formulation gives no sort of conception of what life and will and consciousness really are."⁷⁸ It is interesting to notice however, that Ṣabrī does not acknowledge the first three points and that he does the last two although all of them are, more or less, present in Lodge's critique of Haeckel.

* * *

Ṣabrī is deeply concerned about a new phenomenon prevalent among some modern educated Muslims who uncritically accept the views from the West only

⁷² Ibid., v. 2, p. 429. In Haeckel's own words: "...even the atom is not without a rudimentary form of sensation and will, or, as it is better expresses, of feeling (*asthesis*) and inclination (*tropesis*)-that is, a universal 'soul' of the simplest character." *The Riddle of the Universe* (Die Weltraetsel, 1895-1899), trans. Joseph McCabe (London: Watts & Co., 1934), p. 80.

⁷³ See: *Life and Matter: A Criticism of Haeckel's "Riddle of the Universe"* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1905).

⁷⁴ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 429-430. In Lodge's own words: "there is no necessary justification for assuming that a phenomenon exhibited by an aggregate of particles must be possessed by the ingredients of which it is composed". p. 4. See also: Chapters V and X.

⁷⁵ Cf. Lodge, p. 50.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 430.

⁷⁸ Lodge, pp. 48-49.

because these views are coming from the West.⁷⁹ At one point, Şabrî—in utter despair— even laments the faith of Muslim materialists saying that “I wish they imitated those Western thinkers in the West who speak by the logic of reason.”⁸⁰ Therefore, Şabrî was not biased against Western civilization and modernity. He rather tried to achieve a true understanding of modernity with its different aspects, which is perhaps odd for someone who is considered to be orthodox and traditional. Furthermore, he states that “in the West, there are philosophical trends and many authors who have ruthlessly criticized the movements of materialism, atheism and positivism.”⁸¹ In this regard, Muştafâ Şabrî was trying to prove that modernity has got the other, if it can be dubbed as, *immaterial* side as well, although minor yet a significant one. This attempt of his, namely to prove the existence of the other side of modernity and to dismiss the knowledge of its major proponents in the East, was probably inspired by an ancient logical rule which says that *al-sālibah al-juz’iyyah tanquḍ al-mūjibah al-kulliyah*. In this way he was questioning the Eastern modernist’s acquaintance with the very subject of their advocacy and promotion, and, in this regard, he did not spare efforts to accuse them of ignorance. They appeared to him more like common popular writers than serious intellectuals.⁸² According to him, they could not predict the consequences of the views that they carelessly imported to the East and when they would be reminded of their consequences, implications and bearings on religion and Muslim scholarship they would simply not give it serious thought and would simply decline to amend their views.⁸³ Şabrî does not consider this attitude as that of educated people and profound intellectuals.

⁷⁹ See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 1, p. 145, v. 2, p. 313.

⁸⁰ Ibid., v. 1, p. 48.

⁸¹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 365.

⁸² M. Sükrü Hanioglu states the Ottoman materialism is “an unsophisticated offshoot of the original doctrine of materialism based itself rather vaguely upon the superiority of scientific truth and the empirical method of investigation”. See: “Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman Materialists on Science, Religion and Art,” in Elisabeth Özdalga, ed. *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy* (London: Routledge-Curzon: 2005), p. 28.

⁸³ *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 1, p. 48.

Interestingly enough, Şabrî did not deal with Karl Marx and his dialectical materialism⁸⁴ in spite of its prominence both in intellectual and political history of the West. But, on the other side, dialectical materialism, at least in his time, was not widely adopted and disseminated by Muslim intellectuals as was the case with the so called scientific materialism.⁸⁵ In instances like this, Şabrî seems to have limited his discourse to powerful responses without developing his ideas towards a larger perspective. One cannot resist a feeling that Şabrî could have fertilized his ideas more fruitfully and efficiently.

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During these deliberations, sometimes it appears that Şabrî might have borrowed certain arguments from those thinkers who severely criticized materialism in the West. M. Sait Özervarlı observes that:

It is not surprising, therefore, that European criticisms of materialist scientism, such as Henri Poincaré's critical relativism, Emile Boutroux's scientific indeterminism, and Henri Bergson's creationist and progressive evolutionism attracted the attention of certain Ottoman academicians, who translated these authors into Turkish as a response to the transmission of popular materialism into Ottoman language and culture.⁸⁶

But Şabrî was quick to dismiss this kind of feeling by saying that he relied on his original arguments in refuting certain issues in modernity and that he only cited their opinions for the matter of *al-isti'nās* not for *al-istidlāl*.⁸⁷ Interestingly

⁸⁴ For an interesting comparison between scientific and dialectical materialisms, see: Frederick Gregory, "Scientific Versus Dialectical Materialism: A Clash of Ideologies in Nineteenth Century German Radicalism," in *Isis*, Vol. 68, No. 2. (Jun., 1977), pp. 206-223.

⁸⁵ However, later Muslim thinkers such as Muḥammad Sa'id Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *Naqd Awhām al-Māddiyyah al-Jadaliyyah (al-Diyalaktikiyyah)* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āşir, 2005 [1978]) offered an Islamic critique of it.

⁸⁶ "Alternative Approaches to Modernization in the Late Ottoman Empire: İzmirli İsmail Hakkı's Religious Thought against Materialist Scientism," in *Int. J. Middle East Studies* (2007), vol. 39, p. 81. The works of these philosophers were translated into Turkish language: Henri Poincaré, *İlim ve Faraziye: Felsefe-i İlmiyye (Science et hypothese)*, 2nd ed., trans. Salih Zeki (İstanbul: Milli Matbaa, 1927); Emile Boutroux, *İlim ve Din (Science et religion dans la philosophie contemporaine)*, trans. Hüseyin Cahid Yalçın (İstanbul: Akşam Matbaası, 1927); Henri Bergson, *Şuurun Bila Vasıta Mutaları Hakkında (Les données immédiates de la conscience)*, trans. Halil Nimetullah Öztürk (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1928) and Şabrî was familiar with them.

⁸⁷ For a comparison between his way of using Bacon's arguments and Farid Wajdi's way, see: v. 1, p. 150.

enough, after his long discussions he would cite certain Western thinkers one by one but he would not incorporate their arguments in the main body of his discussions. Rather he would give it a special section. In Şabırî's own words:

I reached this [conclusion] with my own reasoning which God betowed upon me, [reasoning] from whose efficacy He did not deprive me. Then I became acquainted with ideas of contemporary Western scientists and their supporters who endorse my criticism of materialism and Darwinism. Henceforth, I will quote samples of their statements, not in order to prove the correctness of what I already deemed proper [only] because I based it on my own evidence, but to prove that sound rational reasoning is universal [and that it] does not differ in the East and the West.⁸⁸

Perhaps, one should not underestimate the fact that Şabırî was aware that many intellectuals in the Muslim world were so much impressed by the West that they would not accept his sound reasoning but oddly enough rather accept the same reasoning from a Western thinker. In connection with this, Şabırî felt that his response would not be appreciated as it would have been in the atmosphere of the Ottoman Empire where religion and the '*ulamā*' were treated with respect. In his view, modernity in general and materialism in particular have led not only to the disrespect of '*ulamā*' but also to the mockery of them. Consequently, the ideas of '*ulamā*' ceased to exercise influence on intellectuals and masses as they used to do in the past.⁸⁹ Hence, Şabırî began one of his articles which Egyptian *al-Risālah* refused to publish and which was titled as "Recent Western Revelation to the Modern al-Azhar" with these words:

May God forgive Al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh [because] when he wanted to reform al-Azhar he attacked the old '*ulamā*' and distanced Muslims — especially the educated youth— from them... he attacked them until he purged them, or —at least— made them forgotten. And due to this reformation of Al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh, people like Dr. Zakī Mubārak could say in *al-Risālah*, issue 572: "We have snatched the flag of Islam from the ignoramuses (meaning '*ulamā*' *al-dīn*) so our pens became the authority in interpreting *Uṣūl al-Dīn*."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 285.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 43.

⁹⁰ The dots and brackets in this quotation are Şabırî's not mine. *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 57.

And then again:

And the natural consequence of relinquishing the *'ulamā'* and their sciences —on which religion relies— is the death of religion itself.⁹¹

In this regard, it is noteworthy to mention that Ṣabrī uses the expression of “death of religion” which is similar to the widespread use of this word in the West as the “death of God”, which was popularized by Friedrich Nietzsche.⁹²

What really seems to have provoked Ṣabrī about materialism was not only its radical attack on *al-'Aql*, reason, metaphysics, religion and its basic premises, rather, its attempt to force them out of human life and force itself instead. Materialism never appealed to him intellectually as a consistent philosophical system. It rather appeared to him as an ideological system,⁹³ which it really was, and as such, sounded to him polemical rather than academic or scientific. Not only that, it looked like *religious* preaching more than serious intellectual discourse, and as such secularism, atheism or agnosticism were presented, paradoxically, with religious fervour. Since *ʿIlm al-Kalām*'s early works were polemical in nature and since its polemical method developed to the limit of sophistication, Ṣabrī, in encountering these materialistic attacks on religion, was very much at home. Moreover, due to materialistic non-intellectual character, it never really posed a threat to Ṣabrī's excellence, but due to its pervasive popularity and widespread appeal, he, owing to his scholarly maturity, considered it as his intellectual duty to respond to it, and owing to his deep affiliation with religion, he felt it as his religious duty as well to defend religion from these relentless attacks.

Although he did not approve of materialism as an idea because it conflicted with basic logical arguments and indispensable religious premises and beliefs, he tried to prove that materialism in some of its forms, did not necessarily lead its

⁹¹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 57.

⁹² “God is dead” first appears in *The Gay Science* [*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, (Chemnitz: Vorlag Von Ernst Schmeiltner, 1882)], section 108 (New Struggles), in section 125 (The Madman), and for a third time in section 343 (The Meaning of our Cheerfulness). It is also found in Nietzsche's classic work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [*Also sprach Zarathustra* (Chemnitz: Vorlag Von Ernst Schmeiltner, 1883)].

⁹³ The term Ideology seems to have appeared at this time in Europe.

proponents in the West to disbelief and atheism as it did in the East.⁹⁴ He insisted that major Western thinkers believed in the existence of God although their philosophies contained recognizable materialistic principles that inevitably led to atheism, or at least, to the weakening of the status of religion among the intellectuals in the West. For instance, he glorifies Descartes, who is considered to be the father of modern philosophy, for his argument for the existence of God and expresses his bewilderment in front of Muslim materialists that those early materialists in the West, such as Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) “a staunch seventeenth century French materialist philosopher who attacked the philosophy of Aristotle and criticized Descartes and his followers in support of materialistic Epicurean school, and in spite of that, he did not deduce his atheism from the materialistic trends —like the philosophers of the eighteen century did— but, on the contrary, believed that God created matter”.⁹⁵ Isaac Newton, although a pure mechanist, still believed that God put the world in motion and then left it to function on its own without further interfering in it. Pierre La Place (1749-1827), “in spite of his high stature in natural sciences, was a monotheist.”⁹⁶ On the other hand, Şabrî even quotes Büchner’s sorrow over Western towering personalities’ belief in God such as J. W. von Goethe (1749-1832) and Saccai “in spite of their being the greatest *scientists and thinkers*.”⁹⁷ Şabrî is also keen to note that Charles Darwin (1809-1882) insisted that his theory of evolution, which was considered to be the strongest weapon against religion, in Darwin’s words, “does not abolish the Law of Moses.”⁹⁸

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Looking at the Western civilization from a broader perspective, not only through its philosophical and intellectual trends, Şabrî argues that the Western

⁹⁴ *Mawqif al-'Aql* v. 2, p. 277.

⁹⁵ Ibid., see the footnote on p. 277, v. 2. In order to be more exact, Gassendi believed that atoms, the basic mater of the existence, were created by God. He also continued to hold the Christian idea of immortality of soul. His most popular work is: *Syntagma Philosophicum Epicurus* (The Hague, 1658).

⁹⁶ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, see the same footnote v. 2 p. 277.

⁹⁷ Ibid., v. 2, p. 277.

⁹⁸ Ibid., v. 2, p. 272.

superiority lies in its *al-māddī* or material advancement; not in *al-ma'navī* the intellectual one:

All the Western inventions are materialistic goods used to fulfil their desires and greed; and although, they possess the intellect, yet they do not take interest in it except for utilizing it for wordly gains.⁹⁹

He further argues that "the intellectuals of the Western civilization want their civilization to live and want all other [civilizations] to die,"¹⁰⁰ as a clear allusion to the materialistic influences on the Western ethics and politics which increasingly became extremely utilitarian and pragmatic. And looking at it from the Eastern perspective, Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī does not fail to mention the alarming translation of the materialistic theory into practice by the Muslim anarchist rulers such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Although the Muslim rulers of that time and particularly in Egypt were transmitters of modernity to the Muslim world, Ṣabrī does not seem to talk about these rulers openly as he did in the case of Atatürk. This may point to the general suppression of freedom to criticize the incoming ideas from the West in the Muslim World and the proponents of modernity.¹⁰¹ Ṣabrī, however, mentions that the process of modernization in Egypt is similar to the process of modernization in Turkey with one essential difference, namely; that in Turkey it was done by force while in Egypt it was done through the efforts of thinkers and intellectuals. This observation does not seem very accurate especially keeping in mind the efforts of the modernist Ottoman intellectuals from the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.

Conclusion

Ṣabrī was stunned by the onslaught of popular materialism among the intellectual élites in Turkey and Egypt, and in order to understand this strange phenomenon he embarked on a wide revision of Western philosophical heritage

⁹⁹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 61.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., v. 1, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 54.

from the earliest times to his own age. By carefully choosing his terminology and insisting on Arabic terms, he attempted to retain the link between past and present Muslim scholarship that many were eager to slash away. He did not find it suitable to rely on classical Islamic sources only rather he seriously engaged with modern philosophical, scientific and cultural developments in the West. From the classical Muslim sources however, he chiefly benefited from the use of *Kalām* methodology which he applied in his own peculiar way and according to the needs and standards of his time. He consciously wanted to underline his own methodology in reasoning as opposed to modern methodologies and ways with which certain Muslim intellectuals were overimpressed. By reverting directly to the modern philosophical and scientific heritage of the West, Şabrî confirmed the impossibility of engaging with modern Islamic thought without grasping the nature of modern Western thought and its translation in the Islamic context. Engaging with Muslim and Eastern materialists, Şabrî wanted to prove that their view of Western modernity was exclusively materialistic, reductionist and hence incorrect because, to him, modernity had the other side which they intentionally minimized and undervalued; the side of rationality that is not strictly and exclusively based on affirming material and sensual on one hand, and denying immaterial on the other.

Şabrî sees materialism as a general characteristic of the Modern Age. From his analysis, it becomes clear that leading Western thinkers have contributed to it in some way or the other. He realizes this characteristic and endeavours to explore it as much as possible. In his treatment of materialism, it is clear that he did not approach it narrowly nor did he deal with it as represented by a particular person only. On the contrary, he discussed its salient features as an overall trend of modernity and dealt with them wherever he identified their traces in different philosophical schools of various Western and Western-minded Muslim thinkers. He never discussed materialism in a separate chapter, which makes a reconstruction and evaluation of his view on materialism a challenging task. Therefore, his treatment is characteristic in a way that materialism is treated as a subject or as a prominent trait of the Modern Age; not materialism as proposed or advocated by

any one particular thinker in the East or the West. In other words, Ṣabrī does not look at materialism as an isolated concept in modernity. Rather, he looks at it as an overall enveloping characteristic that deeply penetrates into the major modern concepts of nearly everything significant in the modern thought. Therefore, he does not treat it only through its main proponents and advocates, but also through the main ideas, conceptualizations and scientific discoveries that were prevalent in the West at that time. This proves that Ṣabrī also grasped the nature of modernity and its chief elements and components.

In the end, Ṣabrī's overall assessment of modern materialism was that in its finality, although supported by the amazing discoveries and progress of science, it did not improve as an idea from the time of Epicurus. For him, it was as futile and illogical as it used to be in the ancient Western times. In Ṣabrī's very words:

[...] the author of the article¹⁰² adorns this futile ancient school of thought [...] with a robe of scientific jargon which suits the man of the twentieth century to adopt it as his own school of thought and to dispense with what people believed in past centuries such as the belief in the existence of the Creator of beings and their orderliness.¹⁰³

He also sees the main proponents of materialism in the West, notably Büchner, as skin-deep intellectuals, devoid of any philosophical significance along with those in the Orient who blindly followed him. However, Ṣabrī, in spite of materialism's lack of deep intellectuality, did not fail to recognize the overall importance of materialism as a pervading concept of modernity. As such, he dealt with it and considered it important despite of its poor intrinsic and intellectual value.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² A certain Egyptian student who studied in France and whose article won the prize of the best article in the prestigious *Al-Abrām* newspaper under the following title: "The Equipment for the Success of Men of the Twenty First Century". See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 186.

¹⁰³ Ibid., v. 1 p. 190.

¹⁰⁴ For an interesting evaluation of materialism, see: E. A. Gellner's chapter on "French Eighteenth-Century Materialism," in D. J. O'Connor, ed. *A Critical History of Western Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 278.

Chapter II

Modern Science

Perhaps, the most impressive component of modernity that both Muslims and non-Muslims tried to incorporate in their culture and civilization was modern science. The ways modern science entered the Muslim world, however, varied. Whereas its entry in the majority of the Muslim countries was accompanied with colonization and missionary activities, the Ottomans, after sustaining serious military setbacks in the beginning of the eighteenth century, started the adoption of science as an indigenous drive for modernization of military and administration.¹ Şabrî argues that these defeats had even greater repercussions; since the Western military might was based on science, and the Ottoman military might was based on religion, in the long run, it came to be perceived as modern science's victory over old sciences and religion.² However, initially, the Ottomans approached science in a highly utilitarian and pragmatic manner, limited use and specific areas³ but soon after, especially with the Young Turks, science assumed claim of having the right to construct a new *Weltanschauung* totally independent of religion. This novel phenomenon, of course, perilously challenged the established traditional paradigm of Islam.⁴ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu rightly points that: "for

¹ See: Berrak Burçak, *Science, A Remedy for all Ills: Healing "the Sick Man of Europe": A Case for Ottoman Scientism* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton University, January 2005), p. 1.

² See: *Mawqif al-'Aql wa 'l-'Ilm wa 'l-'Ālam min Rabb al-'Ālamīn wa 'Ibādih al-Mursalīn*, v. 1, pp. 90-91 and pp. 97-98.

³ Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu specialized in the area of the Ottoman contribution to science and its adoption from Europe up to the 19th century. Some of his publications include: "Ottoman Science in the Classical Period and early Contacts with European Sciences and Technology," in E. İhsanoğlu, ed. *Transfer of Modern Science & Technology to the Muslim World* (İstanbul: IRCICA, 1992), pp. 1-48; E. İhsanoğlu, "Ottomans and European Science," in Patrick Petitjean, Catherine Jami and Anne-Marie Moulin, eds. *Science and Empires* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), vol. 136, pp. 37-48; "Some Remarks on Ottoman Science and its Relation with European Science & Technology up to the End of the Eighteenth Century," in *Journal of the Japan-Netherlands Institute* 1991 (3): 45-73; "19. Yy Başında Kültür Hayatı ve Beşiktaş Cemiyet-i İlmiyesi," in *Belleten* 1987 51 (200), pp. 801-828.

⁴ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu focuses on the Young Turk era. See his: *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks 1902-1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1986); *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Abdullah*

Ottoman intellectuals science attained the status of religion, and faith in science usurped the position of religious belief; thus "science" became endowed with a transcendent meaning."⁵ This growing trend of exaggerated trust in science and overestimation of the efficacy of its methods and application in all spheres of human life came to be known as scientism,⁶ yet another Western "ism" to find its way to the Muslim World. It is in this backdrop that Muṣṭafā' Ṣabrī looks into the nature of science and its methodology especially focusing on its impact on modern Muslim intellectuals and religion.

i. The Issue of Legality (*Al-Mashrū'īyyah*)

It is worthy to note that Ṣabrī does not discuss the issue of legality of reading the books of non-Muslims and learning from their sciences although that used to be a burning issue among some 'ulamā' mostly *fuqahā*' and *muḥaddithūn* of the Muslim Middle Ages and of his own time. Moreover, the question of legality was so much crucial that it used to be included in the classic manuals of research methodology.⁷ Discussing the question of legality from the Sharī'ah point of view was a precondition for any kind of research to be conducted on any particular issue.⁸ This question remained to be a big issue in the Muslim Middle Ages even till

Cevdet ve Dönemi (İstanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1981); "Transformation of the Ottoman Intelligentsia and the Idea of Science," in *Academia de Stiinte Sociale Si Politice A Republicii Socialiste Romania 1987 XXIV* (2), pp. 1-6; "Garbular: Their Attitudes Toward Religion and Their Impact on the Official Ideology of the Turkish Republic," in *Studia Islamica* 86 (1997), pp. 133-158; "Osmanlı Aydınlarındaki Değişme ve Bilim," in *Toplum ve Bilim* (Fall 1984) 27, pp. 183-192.

⁵ *The Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 11-12.

⁶ Regarding scientism, see: Iain Cameron and David Edge, *Scientific Images and their Social Uses: An Introduction to the Concept of Scientism* (London: Butterworth, 1979); Tom Sorrell, *Scientism: Philosophy and the Infatuation with Science* (London: Routledge, 1991); Mikael Stenmark, "What is Scientism?" in *Religious Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), vol. 33, pp. 15-32; Mikael Stenmark, *Scientism: Science, Ethics and Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

⁷ The verses are: "The Principles of all Disciplines are ten/the Definition, Subject and then Fruit. The Value and the Relation and the Founder/the Name and Deduction and the Ruling of the Law Giver. The Issues, and one with another suffice/And who get them all avail the honor. See: Ibrāhīm Al-Bayjūrī, *Hāshiyah 'alā al-Sanūsiyyah* (Cairo: 1898), p. 16. See the modern interpretation and application of the poem by Dr. Ḥasan Maḥmūd al-Shāfi'ī in his *Al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsāt 'Ilm al-Kalām* 2nd Edition (Karachi: Idārat al-Qur'ān wa 'l-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah, 2001), p. 20. Translation is mine.

⁸ This reminds one of contemporary debates in the field of Medical ethics which widely discuss the issues relating to the ethics and the development of medical research especially in such issues as

the time of the Andalusian philosopher and judge, Ibn Rushd (1128-1198), who apparently decided to finalize it once and for all in his book *Faṣl al-Maqāl fīmā bayn al-Ḥikmat wa 'l-Sharī'at min al-Ittiṣāl* perhaps not so much as a philosopher as much as a *faqīh*. Yet, there is a substantial difference between Ibn Rushd and Ṣabrī; Ibn Rushd was concerned solely with the ancient traditions, science and philosophy and their early contribution *before* the advent of Islam, and from which Muslims could possibly benefit. Ibn Rushd perhaps could not have imagined that there would come a time when Islamic civilization would have to learn from another living civilization which was non-Muslim. Therefore, his *fatwā* is only about the past civilizations, not about the present and contemporary ones. Ṣabrī, as an *ʿālim* of traditional stature and true representative of classic Islamic scholarship in the modern world, seems to have overcome that issue in his writings not by a religious decree, to which he was even officially entitled, but by indulging himself freely in the encounter with modernity without having second thoughts. Throughout his writings one can feel that acquiring the knowledge about modern sciences and philosophy has become a necessity for Muslim scholars and intellectuals. However, unlike many modernists who argued that Islamic scholarship should be integrated in the Western paradigm, Ṣabrī struggles to incorporate Western knowledge into the Islamic intellectual framework. Overall, Ṣabrī shares with the rest of the Muslim intellectuals and masses their sympathy and passion for *al-ʿilm*, the knowledge, as traditionally understood in general, but has some reservations about its definition, usage, methodology and aims in the West and how it is understood in the East.

Ṣabrī approaches modern science from different angles and rarely treats it as a subject in its own right. Rather, he discusses science comparatively once in relation to religion and old sciences such as Logic and *ʿIlm al-Kalām*, and at other times in relation to reason, and philosophy, both ancient, Greek and Muslim; and the modern Western. Perhaps this is best illustrated by the titles of three chapters

cloning and although the ability and skill to conduct this kind of research has been achieved yet the question remains whether it is morally acceptable to continue this kind of projects or not.

in the second volume of his *Mawqif al-'Aql*: "the Position of Science towards Religion", "the Position of Science towards Reason" and "the Position of Experimentation towards Religion."⁹ However, from these multidimensional and comparative approaches, from other scattered information about science and from science as related to the mentioned disciplines, an attempt will be made to reconstruct Ṣabrī's view of science *per se*.

ii. Science and *al-'Ilm*

The word science is of Latin origin *scientia* which means "knowledge" and *scire* "to know".¹⁰ Until the Enlightenment, the word used to be applied for any sort of systematic knowledge and was, broadly speaking, equal with the word *philosophy*.¹¹ However, later on, by the beginning of the Modern Era, it was applied only for the specific branch of philosophy that was known as *philosophia naturalis* or natural philosophy.¹² But it has been only in the nineteenth century that science became associated with materialistic, naturalistic and, what came to be called as "scientific methodology," in contrast to philosophy which continued to draw on traditionally speculative and abstract method. With the passage of time, and under the strong influence of emerging sciences, philosophizing became more limited to the realm of material and natural world.¹³ This, however, marked the ushering of a new age when philosophy allied with science abandoning the Church and its teachings, and in this way introduced an important characteristic, at least

⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 275-302, 303-341 and 342-470 respectively.

¹⁰ See: Webster's dictionary which defines science as: "knowledge, often as opposed to intuition, belief, etc. systematized knowledge derived from observation, study, and experimentation carried out in order to determine the nature or principles of what is being studied;...the systematized knowledge of nature and the physical world." *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), p. 1622.

¹¹ See: Neville MacMorris, *The Natures of Science* (New York: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), pp. 31-33.

¹² This corresponds with a title of a book written by the famous *scientist* Isaac Newton.

¹³ For a good study that contextualizes the history of science, see: S. Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). See also: John Henry, *The Scientific Revolution and the Origin of Modern Science*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

authority-wise; letting science in the Modern Age play the role of Church in the Middle Ages.¹⁴

In Islam, the most widely used term for knowledge has been *al-ʿilm* and it enjoys a high status due to many reasons.¹⁵ To mention only a few: some of the Beautiful Names of Allah such as *al-ʿĀlim*, *al-ʿAlīm* and *al-ʿAllām* which point to His all-encompassing knowledge and omniscience are derived from the same triumvirate root *ʿayn-lām-mīm*.¹⁶ The other is that *al-ʿilm* is a tremendously praiseworthy and valuable quality hailed throughout the Qurʾān and the Sunnah.¹⁷ When the modern translations began in the Muslim World, the Latin derivation of *scientia* was rendered into Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and other Islamic languages as *al-ʿilm* and immediately assumed a prominent status among the educated élites and layman alike owing to its aforementioned compelling religious connotations which were vastly influential in the Muslim societies. At a relatively later stage, perhaps, the Muslim educated élites became aware of the special methodology, assumptions and presuppositions of modern science. Therefore, Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī was keen to differentiate between *al-ʿilm* as perceived and accepted in the East and the 'science' as developed and understood in the West. He warned that the two conceptions should not be mixed and confused. In one of his responses he articulates:

he means by *al-ʿilm* [science] *al-ʿilm al-ḥadīth* [modern science] which does not recognize anything that is not verifiable by one of the exterior senses [...], [and by] *al-ʿilm al-qadīm al-ʿaqlī* [old rational science] [that] on which the *ʿulamāʾ* [religious scholars] rely while establishing articles of faith without requiring evidence from senses unlike *al-ʿilm al-ḥadīth*.¹⁸

¹⁴ For a comprehensive account of the characteristic of the modern age, see: Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1946), pp. 479-482.

¹⁵ For the etymological meaning of the word, see: "ʿAyn, Lām, Mīm," in Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif), v. 4 pp. 3082-3086.

¹⁶ For a detailed explanation on that, see: Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqsad al-Asna fī Sharḥ Asmāʾ Allāh al-Husnā*. Arabic text, edited with introduction, Fadlou A. Shehadi (Beyrouth: Dar El-Machreq Editeurs, 1971), pp. 92-93. And for a brief definition of *al-ʿilm* and a survey of its branches in classic Islam, see: D. B. Macdonald, "ʿIlm," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, v. 3, pp. 1133-1134.

¹⁷ For instance, see: the first chapter in Al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (Samaragh: Maktabah wa Maṭbaʿah), v. 1, pp. 5-88.

¹⁸ *Mawqif al-ʿAql*, v. 1 p. 120.

According to this statement, Şabrî realizes that the two opposing terms: *al-‘ilm al-qadîm*¹⁹ and *al-‘ilm al-ḥadîth* denote two different approaches to knowledge.²⁰ The former points to the Muslim intellectual heritage which integrated the Greek and other traditions, while the latter stands solely for modern Western science. Furthermore, he is of the view that this distinction between the two approaches to knowledge ensues with the systematic efforts of Bacon.²¹

On the other hand, Şabrî uses a number of terms to denote modern science. In addition to *al-‘ilm al-ḥadîth*²² which has already been mentioned, he uses *al-‘ilm al-tajrîbî*,²³ experimental science; *al-‘ilm al-māddî*,²⁴ materialistic science; *al-‘ilm al-ḥadîth al-gharbî*,²⁵ modern Western science; *al-‘ilm al-ḥadîth al-māddî*,²⁶ modern materialistic science; *al-‘ilm al-ṭabî‘î*,²⁷ natural science or natural philosophy; *al-‘ilm al-ḥadîth al-muthbit*²⁸ modern positive science. Sometimes he uses *al-‘ilm* or science only without any prefixes or suffixes. It can usually be understood from the context what he really means,²⁹ although it can be confusing sometimes or, if it is somehow not clear, he would specify in the footnotes³⁰ or within brackets,³¹ what he does or does not mean, depending on the context. He is not fond of modern science as an absolute term for knowledge and he constantly criticizes it.³² Moreover, sometimes *al-‘ilm al-ḥadîth* is not confined to science *per se*; rather, in Şabrî's writings, it acquires quite larger connotations to include modern philosophy as well, especially positive philosophy or *al-‘ilm al-muthbit*³³ or *al-*

¹⁹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 120.

²⁰ Ibid., v. 1, p. 124.

²¹ See: Ibid. v. 2, p. 314.

²² Ibid., v. 2, p. 306, 335, 420, 450, 470.

²³ Ibid., v. 2, p. 448.

²⁴ Ibid., v. 1, p. 123.

²⁵ Ibid., v. 1, p. 125 and v. 2, p. 318.

²⁶ Ibid., v. 1, p. 116.

²⁷ Ibid., v. 1, p. 199 and v. 2, pp. 314-315, 332, 337, 378, 411, 450, 451.

²⁸ Ibid., v. 2, p. 307, 308, 312, 314, 470.

²⁹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 118 and v. 2 pp. 331, 334, 452, 453.

³⁰ By simply pointing like this: "I do not mean the modern science". See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 245.

³¹ See: Ibid., v. 1, pp. 381-382.

³² See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 119.

³³ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 313, 444, 447, 448.

wad'ī. In such instances he equates *al-'ilm* to philosophy which is in the Muslim context a kind of *al-'ilm* as well.

These and other adoptions of Western terminology on the part of Ṣabrī indicate his willingness to converse with modernity and to take up some of its terminology temporarily so that a greater cause may be achieved; the cause of mutual understanding between what he represents and what modernity represents. In one instance, Ṣabrī praises 'Abd al-'Azīz Ismā'īl Pāshā because:

Pāshā [...] did well when he rendered what contemporary writers call "natural causes" as *al-sunan al-ilāhiyyah* [natural laws set by God]. It is a correct rendering though in this book we follow contemporary terminology because we are in a state of working on mutual understanding of common issues.³⁴

From these different attributes such as *al-māddī*, *al-tajrībī*, *al-ḥadīth*, *al-ṭabī'ī* and *al-muthbit* which Ṣabrī widely uses to point to modern science and to make it distinct from other disciplines, it can be deduced that Ṣabrī understood the nature of modern science and that, according to different contexts, he emphasized its different characteristics. On the other hand, under the impression of traditional understanding of *al-'ilm*, Ṣabrī included in it an extensive range of sciences of Muslim scholarship such as religion *al-dīn* and religious sciences *al-'ulūm al-dīniyyah*, Muslim theosophy and philosophy *al-ḥikmah* and *al-falsafah* and also modern Western sciences and philosophy.³⁵ His insistence on the inclusion of science in the concept of *al-'ilm* is a humble contribution towards establishment and development of scientific and philosophical terminology in the modern Muslim academic and intellectual discourse.

³⁴ Ibid., v. 1, p. 356.

³⁵ In this, he seems to agree with one of his contemporaries, Abdülhak Adnan (Adivar), who in his *La science chez les Turcs Ottomans* (Paris, G. P. Maisonneuve, 1939, later published as *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim* (İstanbul, Mâarif Matbaası, 1943) suggests that all human knowledge is considered *al-'ilm*.

iii. Definition of Science

Şabrî launches his discussion on science from a wide perspective that does not deal with science only but that includes science as a part of larger philosophy of *al-'ilm* in general and Islam in particular. Following the dictates and peculiarities of Arabic language which uses the term *al-'ilm* as rendering for science, that was, perhaps, a logical line to pursue. He accepts the traditional definition of *al-'ilm* as *ṣifatun tūjib tamyīzan lā yaḥtamil al-naqīḍ* or the attribute that necessitates distinction which does not suppose contradiction.³⁶ Although the tradition of *'Ilm al-Kalām* has produced numerous popular definitions of knowledge, Şabrî selected this particular one which, perhaps, in its last part alludes to science; because its results may contradict each other. Therefore, certainly, science cannot fit into this definition of *al-'ilm* as long as its results keep changing and contradicting. But approaching *al-'ilm* more comprehensively and dividing it into types, he finds a place for it under the overall umbrella of *al-'ilm*. According to him there are two main branches of knowledge:

- 1) The definite knowledge of causes which may be reached via three ways: (a) *al-badāhah* or the obvious, (b) *al-ḥawās* or external senses, and (c) *al-dalīl al-'aqliyy* or rational proof.
- 2) Organized body of knowledge such as Philosophy, Logic, Nature, *Fiqh*, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* etc. Each of these sciences is specialized in its own domain. They neither affirm nor negate something that lies outside their boundaries. Moreover, these sciences do not claim any right to judge anything that is outside their respective jurisdictions.³⁷

However, Şabrî goes on to say:

[...] contemporary scholars are habitual of limiting the name of positive science and even absolute science for naturalistic and materialistic scientists

³⁶ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 107, 453. There are few other popular definitions of *al-'ilm*: "it is the firm belief which agrees with reality" and the definition of *al-ḥukamā'* is: the impression of form upon the mind" and al-Jurjānī comments: "the former is more specific than the latter". *Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1990), pp. 160-161.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 276.

and their sciences only just because they [sciences] are based on experiment [...] but this is only their claim; not the nature of those sciences at all.³⁸

Therefore, he would like to place science in an Islamic framework closer to God's laws *al-sunan al-ilāhiyyah* thus describing it as follows:

natural science does not stand for abolishing the connection of universe with God, its Creator and relegating the genesis of things to themselves, but it stands for science which investigates existing things and their nature.³⁹

Şabrī does not forget to add that by science he means "modern science that is close to our times, based on experiments and founded by Bacon."⁴⁰ Perhaps there is an inference in this statement to the effect that modern science is still a recent development, compared to the ancient Greek and Muslim contributions that have their established centuries old tradition. Şabrī constantly emphasizes this difference. Accordingly, this *new* science, with its emphasis on this-worldly and the material, and the science that ignores what is beyond the physical; should not be allowed to take over and assume a leading position among the other relevant sciences. In this way, Şabrī is cautious not to disrupt the balance between these sciences because that may lead to the denial of the metaphysical realm which may seriously reflect on the existence of God and other basic religious tenets such as prophethood and revelation, and miracle and the unseen that are included in it.⁴¹

As far as Islamic framework is concerned, Şabrī places science within the scope of *ʿIlm al-Kalām*. He quotes a very late definition⁴² of *al-Kalām* where "its subject matter is the information itself as related to the establishment of the articles of faith be it related to it immediately or from a distance." "And this is," Şabrī

³⁸ Ibid., v. 2, p. 277. See also: Ibid., v. 1, pp. 91, 421 and v. 2, pp. 107, 128.

³⁹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 277.

⁴⁰ Ibid., v. 1, p. 148, v. 2, pp. 313-314, p. 304.

⁴¹ This issue will be discussed at length in the chapters on "Religion and Reason" and "Religion and Science", pp. 185-204 and 205-220 respectively.

⁴² For a historical survey of the development of *ʿIlm al-Kalām* and its definitions see particularly Dr. Ḥasan Maḥmūd al-Shāfiʿī, *Al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsāt ʿIlm al-Kalām*, 2nd ed. (Karachi: Idārat al-Qurʾān wa ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyyah, 2001), especially pp. 9-20. See also: M. Abdel Haleem "Early Kalām," in S. H. Nasr and O. Leaman, eds. *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), v. 1, pp. 71-89, which is almost identical to Dr. al-Shāfiʿī's *al-Madkhal*.

comments, "the preferred definition."⁴³ Therefore, the *Mutakallimūn* have openly stated that this science, *ʿIlm al-Kalām*:

undertakes from every religious and non-religious science all that is related to the establishment of Islamic articles of faith [...] even if there is something in natural sciences that fits in the study of Islamic beliefs, it is included in *ʿIlm al-Kalām*. Accordingly, they made its subject matter, *al-mʿālūm*, to encompass both the existent and non-existent.⁴⁴

He further supports his view with a long quotation from the classical authorities such as Al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, the interpreter of *al-Mawāqif*, and an outstanding figure in the discipline of *ʿIlm al-Kalām*.⁴⁵

There is no doubt, therefore, that the *Mutakallimūn* considered *ʿIlm al-Kalām* as the true encompassing philosophy of Islam, and Ṣabrī, as one of them, is perhaps one of the few Muslim intellectuals in the Modern Age who approached *al-Kalām* in such a way; with full confidence in its strength, efficacy and applicability for the new situation that befell the Muslims.

It is important to note that Ṣabrī in his aforementioned division of *al-ʿilm* did not include revelation *al-wahy* as a source of *al-ʿilm* although in the classic books of *Kalām* its inclusion was inevitable and necessary. He excluded it, perhaps, because of the fact that the authenticity of revelation was a matter of dispute in the Modern Age and that it was not possible to restore its authenticity and validity through science alone. That is why he insisted on a comprehensive approach to *al-ʿilm* which –along with *al-ḥawās* or senses would include *al-badāḥah* or the obvious and *al-ʿaql* or absolute reason by which revelation may be legitimized. Accordingly, the rational sciences were superior not only because they were traditionally more established compared to modern science but also because the material science could not study what is beyond, i.e. the metaphysical; and more specifically, because it could not establish the necessity of the existence of God. Science, however, could only establish the mere existence of God which, in Ṣabrī's

⁴³ *Mawqif al-ʿAql*, v. 1, p. 203.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Cf. Al-Ījī, "Fī Martabat ʿIlm al-Kalām" in *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, nd), p. 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid., v. 1, p. 204.

view, was not enough.⁴⁶ This, of course, has dangerous consequences because the establishment of the necessity of God's existence was a precondition to the existence of Revelation and this could only be proved by the rational not empirical sciences. And, therefore, rational sciences are superior to natural sciences and they are supposed to lead the research and assume the top position.⁴⁷ These words and ideas keep echoing throughout all Ṣabrī's major writings especially his *magnum opus*, *Mawqif al-'Aql*.

iv. The Scope of Science

This leads us to the discussion about the scope of science. As could be deduced from Ṣabrī's thought until now, the scope of science is limited to the immediate physical and material aspect of existence. Science investigates *al-asbāb al-qarībah* or immediate causes of natural phenomena and it should not, by its very definition, encroach beyond that. Whatever is beyond that is simply not science's concern. The problem of the materialists and positivists in understanding science's scope is exactly this. As it can be understood from his comprehensive definition of *al-'ilm*, Ṣabrī argues that science, in its endeavour to understand material existence only, should not disconnect from the larger existence that includes the immaterial and which is studied and explored by absolute reason that is not commanded and controlled by matter and senses.

The other problem related to the scope of science is that although it does not make pretensions to investigate what is beyond material existence and its immediate tangible causes, yet, sometimes encouraged by its success in the sphere of material discoveries and inventions, it trespasses its own limits—which were set up by the scientists themselves—and interferes in the metaphysical which is beyond its reach.

⁴⁶ For a detailed analysis of this issue, see the Chapter on God's existence in Part Three, pp. 214-244.

⁴⁷ Regarding this issue see the Chapters on "Religion and Reason" and "Religion and Science" in Part Two, pp. 178-196 and 197-212 respectively.

Ṣabrī does not mind accepting the results of science when it is properly used inside its own self-defined and self-imposed scope. But he rejects the findings of science when it comes out of its boundaries and tries to solve the questions of metaphysical nature for which science was not developed in the first place. He rejects them on the ground of science itself and its nature and tools before he rejects them on any other rational grounds.

However, this is the case only if science denies the superiority of absolute reason. If it follows reason, it can provide further particular details in support of absolute rational argumentation, reasoning and conclusion. If it does not follow reason, it is not acceptable to Ṣabrī.

v. The Methodology of Science

Ṣabrī often refers to *al-dustūr al-‘ilmī*⁴⁸ which, if literally translated into English, means *the canon of science*. It signifies the procedural steps and processes applied in the course of scientific investigation. *Al-dustūr al-‘ilmī* is a widely spread, over(ab)used and overemphasized term of Ṣabrī's times, exploited by a poles apart range of people; from politicians, journalists, popular writers, intellectuals to even theologians, and the least of them, perhaps, being the scientists by profession.⁴⁹ These circles were so obsessed by the term that one can understand from Ṣabrī that they used to consider it as some kind of a magic word that would make everything possible and good by its very pronunciation, and, on the contrary, that everything except it, was essentially wrong and bad. Another term that he intermittently uses is *al-tarīqah al-‘ilmiyyah* or the scientific methodology, as opposed to *al-tarīqah al-*

⁴⁸ For instance Ṣabrī is suspicious of Farīd Wajdī's application of "*al-dustūr al-‘ilmī*" in compiling a biography of the Prophet p.b.u.h. titled *Al-Sirah al-Muḥammadiyyah tahta Daw al-‘Ilm wa ‘l-Falsafah*, ed. Muḥammad Rajab Bayyūmī (Cairo: Dār al-Miṣriyyah al-Lubnāniyyah, 1993). See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 1, p. 119 and Ibid., v. 2, p. 333. Ṣabrī is also suspicious of Muḥammad Haykal's celebrated work, *Ḥayāt Muḥammad* (Cairo: 1933) trans. Isma‘il Rājī al-Fārūqī, *The Life of Muhammad* (Kuala Lumpur. Islamic Book Trust, nd. First published by American Trust Publications, 1976). For Ṣabrī's comments, see: *Mawqif al-‘Aql* v. 1, pp. 104-127. Wajdī and Haykal use the same term in their writings too.

⁴⁹ See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 1, p. 421.

manṭiqiyyah ancient logical methodology.⁵⁰ Ṣabrī, as an insightful intellectual, tried to resist these populist simplifications and locate the canon in its rightful place within the boundaries of science, and further to locate science in its rightful place within his Islamic theory of knowledge.

Ṣabrī's understanding of what are the core elements that make up the canon of science does not essentially differ from what is commonly understood in the West.⁵¹ They are: observation, hypothesis, experiment and theory. According to him:

the laws of natural sciences are based upon experiment and observation, and results which are derived from experiment and observation are partial accidents which may rise to the level of a general rule due to their regularity but which can never rise to the level of necessity that makes its contradiction impossible.⁵²

However, it must be borne in mind that he seldom discusses all of them, altogether, in one context and in one place. Furthermore, his approach to science is essentially theoretical; emphasizing more its epistemological and philosophical issues. After all, he, like the majority of the Muslim intellectuals of that time, was not a scientist by training and vocation but primarily an intellectual and a thinker.

It is difficult to determine from which point Ṣabrī starts discussing the issue of the canon. There is no exact order in his writings because he treats philosophical and religious issues in relation to science and its methodology. But, perhaps, the best way to present his exposition would be to start with observation as the first step in scientific investigation.

1) Observation

In order to stress the importance of observation, it seems that Ṣabrī would not hesitate to reduce the whole scientific process further to its, in his view,

⁵⁰ See: Ibid., v. 1, pp. 138, 140.

⁵¹ For an overview of the modern scientific method, see: Edgar Bright Wilson, *An Introduction to Scientific Research* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991 [1952]); Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962) and Barry Gower, *Scientific Method: A Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁵² See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 315.

essential component, namely the observation. Observation seems to be the key to scientific discovery. Although Ṣabrī did not elaborate on this issue much, it appears that he was inspired by the Qur'ānic injunction to closely observe natural and historical phenomena.⁵³ However, comparing human senses, which are all included in what is called observation, Ṣabrī concludes that scientists are even biased about some of human senses and prefer one over the other. He gives an example of hearing. According to him, it would not be scientific to accept the existence of Paris on the basis of somebody "hearing" about its existence. But it would be scientifically acceptable if someone has actually "seen" Paris. Therefore he seems to conclude that if science can be reduced to observation and observation further reduced to "seeing", in the end it comes that science is more about what can be *seen* and less about what can be *heard, smelled* or *touched*.

However, perhaps two points should be noted here. The first one is that he is not really addressing the scientific community here but rather those who perceive science as the only way to the truth and those who use science as a tool against religion, especially those in the Muslim East. And secondly that the background of this is most probably the issue of the existence of God, who could be, theologically speaking, *heard* but who could not be *seen* in this world.⁵⁴

⁵³ For instance: "... but look at thy food and thy drink; they show no signs of age; and look at thy donkey: And that We may make of thee a sign unto the people, Look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh. When this was shown clearly to him, he said: "I know that Allah hath power over all things." *Al-Baqarah*, 259; "Many were the Ways of Life that have passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth." *Āl-ʿImrān*, 137; "It is He Who sendeth down rain from the skies: with it We produce vegetation of all kinds: from some We produce green (crops), out of which We produce grain, heaped up (at harvest); out of the date-palm and its sheaths (or spathes) (come) clusters of dates hanging low and near: and (then there are) gardens of grapes, and olives, and pomegranates, each similar (in kind) yet different (in variety): when they begin to bear fruit, feast your eyes with the fruit and the ripeness thereof. Behold! in these things there are signs for people who believe." *Al-Anʿām*, 99; and *Al-Aʿrāf*, 84, 86, 185; *Yūnus*, 101; *Al-Isrāʾ*, 21; *Al-Ankabūt*, 20 and *Al-Ghāshiyah*, 16-20.

⁵⁴ The Prophets could receive revelation from Allah but they could not see Him. See the verses regarding Mūsā p.b.u.h. "When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him, He said: 'O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee.' Allah said: 'By no means canst thou see Me (direct); But look upon the mount; if it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me.' When his Lord manifested His glory on the Mount, He made it as dust. And Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he said: 'Glory be to Thee! to Thee I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe'." *Al-Aʿrāf*, 143. Cf. *Marwqif al-ʿAql*, v. 2, pp. 73-74, 88.

2) Hypothesis

The other methodological step in science is hypothesis. Şabrî does not consider the developing of a hypothesis or an educated guess as strictly a scientific materialistic process but rather as a rational one. And this point of his, perhaps, in the best way, illustrates the extremes of materialism, quasi-scientism and atheism in which discussion he was, unfortunately, forcefully entangled. In fact, he wanted to prove to the materialists that even science, which they consider as an infallible tool and which they place above reason and apply in all spheres of human life, cannot operate without absolute reason; the reason that is detached from matter. It is impossible to imagine science growing without developing a hypothesis. If science is based only on observation and the strength of sensual perception, animals, whose senses are more sophisticated, would be more advanced and more scientific than human beings, and that is —according to observable and undeniable reality— not true. In this way, Şabrî attempts to bring his materialistic and atheist opponents to a contradiction and paradox where they, in fact, have to accept the superiority of reason on one hand, and inferiority of sense, on the other. However, it should not be understood that Şabrî rejects the scientific method. He rather tries to scrutinize it in its minutest details and endeavours to determine the role played by both senses and reason in the scientific inquiry and, by showing that, perhaps, to lessen the materialistic attitude of his opponents.

A mere hypothesis must undergo experiment and it should not be given the status of a scientific theory until it has been strictly checked again and again. The hypothesis should sustain the process of experimentation, and if it does not, it is either abandoned or corrected until it is finally in accord with all the relevant and available data at that certain time. It is only then that the hypothesis reaches the status of a scientific theory which is again a piecemeal partial assertion.

3) Experimentation

Commenting on the importance of experimentation Şabrî succinctly remarks:

[...] I do not deny the importance of experimentation in natural sciences which are related to material [things] and reason's need for the assistance of senses in that regard; even my own reason urges me to concede to this need. Reason, therefore, neither denies the value of sensual experiment nor does it deny the value of natural sciences based on it.⁵⁵

And then more elaborately:

There is no dispute about the benefit of experiment and the need of reason for experiment's assistance in the acquisition and confirmation of data in the realm of material [things] and particulars to which reason cannot arrive alone without senses. And since natural sciences are sciences of matter, and of what is indispensable to it from sensual connections, then the need of reason for experiment in verification of particulars and accidents is natural. And because of that, the occupation with this science and its experiment-based products is more. However, in spite of that, no reasonable person interested in natural and material things should drench in them and forget the functions of absolute reason and its exclusive ability to perceive generalities and set up canons, especially in the perception of what does not belong to the realm of the material.⁵⁶

The process of experimentation is again rigidly materialistic in nature. "Sensual experimentation is solely a tool for perception of the material and natural, or to put it in other words; a tool that is unable to perceive that is beyond the material and natural."⁵⁷ Şabrî even makes it more so, and forces it on his opponents, because materialism and the reliance upon the five senses is their declared criterion. It seems that he reminds them of their own words and positions and it seems that he forces it on them as much as they force materialism on religion and reason. Above all, he stresses the importance of observation, particularly *seeing* and the possibility of conducting an experiment with the same result at any time and providing an undeniable, materialistic and, if needed, even living example of what they claim.

Those who entrust the givens of experiment with superfluous judgments certainly make a hypothesis of their own and fabricate the experiment and its implications. Not only that; if those superfluous judgments are correct

⁵⁵ *Ma'wqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 227.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 316.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 335.

about rational deductions attached to the implication of the experiment, we would have accepted them; but they are not like that. On the contrary, they are false deductions attached to the judgement of experiment on the pretext that it belongs to its correct implication.⁵⁸

Şabri's position is clearly demonstrated in the way he discusses Darwin's theory of Evolution. Şabri's contention is basically that the theory of Evolution is based on a hypothesis and assumption which cannot be established or verified even by rigorous material experiment.⁵⁹

4) Scientific Theory

Even when a scientific theory is reached, it is partial and piecemeal so much so that the smallest bit of evidence may lead to its disapproval or amendment. Its partiality, according to Şabri, stems from its material quality and the recording of the five senses. Matter is ever-changing; it is in constant flux while the senses cannot be totally reliable in all instances. He gives numerous examples on how matter itself is a disputed issue among the materialists: whether it exists or is it a certain conglomeration of forces and energies. Moreover, how the problem of deception of senses reflects on issues in matter. Again, in his view, the only way to avoid this kind of confusion is to rely on reason which can only correct these mistakes.

Therefore, scientific theories are open to criticism and disapproval. Or to put it in other words: correction and refinement. This should not be taken only negatively. On the contrary, it is quite a positive phenomenon thanks to which science grows and expands.

Then he comes to the issue of truth. This kind of scientific information can never be certainly true and final. As compared to the reason which is final and unalterable "science renews itself with the passage of time and does not rest in one

⁵⁸ Ibid., v. 2, pp. 278-279.

⁵⁹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 283. This issue will be dealt with in the coming chapter on "Darwinism". See: pp. 119-124.

state.”⁶⁰ “And very often in science based on experiment, the new contradicts the old.”⁶¹

Commenting on the Herbert Spencer’s definition of “science as a body of organized facts that always increases and gets rid of its mistakes”⁶² Şabrî says:

By science he means the science which relies on experiments; so it may be erroneous or correct [...], and it purifies itself from errors; so it is always prone to change. Even its progress and expansion, from day to day, are due to its potentiality to change.⁶³

Şabrî even quotes John Stuart Mill’s opinion which essentially supports Spencer’s contention. He mentions the example of the bird *Le Cigne* long believed to be exclusively white but after a surprising discovery in Australia they found the same species in black.⁶⁴ In the end, Şabrî concludes:

therefore, our sciences which we get through experiments, no matter how certain we are about them and about their correctness and their long-term utility for us, we cannot guarantee that future experiments will not abandon or amend them.⁶⁵

By emphasizing the comparison between reason and science, Şabrî seems to stress the negative aspect of science’s partiality and potential to change. This makes science weaker than reason in his view. However, Şabrî does not stress the importance of this very aspect for the progress and development of science and thus, human knowledge. From what has been presented till now, it may also appear at times that Şabrî would like to substitute the scientific methodology with logic or reason. If that is true, he could somehow resemble St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who substituted the scientific methodology, which was not developed at his time anyhow, with Aristotelian logic.⁶⁶ On the other hand, it may also appear that Şabrî resembles Descartes who suggested one method for all sciences.

⁶⁰ Ibid., v. 2, p. 276.

⁶¹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 236.

⁶² Ibid., v. 2, pp. 332-333.

⁶³ Ibid., v. 2, p. 333.

⁶⁴ Ibid., v. 1, p. 238.

⁶⁵ Ibid., v. 2, p. 333.

⁶⁶ See: L. P. W., “Science,” in *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, 15th. ed. vol. 36, p. 27.

However, it appears that Ṣābrī would leave the method to be developed by scientists according to the needs of each field. Not only that, the method itself is changeable because it is invented by experiment. His insistence on the supremacy of reason was probably further intensified by the materialists who denied it any role outside the material realm. So, Ṣābrī had to react and prove that the scientific process itself would not be possible without the use of logic and reason. By logic he probably meant the Aristotelian logic as incorporated in *Kalām*. But, common sense, which, according to Ṣābrī was not enclosed by the materialists, could not be excluded. The same is the case with reason; namely, that not only it was the reason of the philosophers but reason itself as an intellectual human faculty.

Having analyzed all this, Ṣābrī concludes that "the aim of science is to produce meticulous results that are in harmony with reality in which there is no doubt, but which are not necessarily impossible to contradict."⁶⁷

vi. The Contribution of Science

Since science has been developed as the tool to control nature and subdue it to the human being, its basic task in fact is to improve the conditions of living materially. In this regard, the contribution of science to the industrialization and "mass production" in the West is an undeniable fact.⁶⁸ Ṣābrī interconnects three concepts in an amazing manner; (1) the industrialization, which could not be achieved without development of science, and science which could not be developed unless (2) the natural laws are discovered, and (3) they could not be discovered if God did not make them stable so much so that they could be called laws. He says:

Industrialization is based on experimental science and irrespective of the greatness of its effect, it is subordinate to laws which God chose while creating things, and which the atheistic West dubs as natural laws.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Maʿwqif al-ʿAql*, v. 2 p. 330.

⁶⁸ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 453.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 355.

For God's laws, Şabrî employs the Islamic terminology and by doing that he clearly hints at those verses which declare that "and you shall not find change in God's laws."⁷⁰

It appears, however, that Şabrî was not aware of the ecological issues that accompanied massive industrialization and that he could not predict its impact on human being and the living environment. That would have been important because he would have approached it from a theological point of view, which is so much relevant in present discussions on environmental issues.

Western progress and dominance in the world is due to the advancement of science on one hand and the success of industrialization on the other.⁷¹ But Şabrî's opinion is that although the West has achieved its dominance through this way, yet, in contrast to Muslim materialists, positivists and many modern intellectuals, he disbelieves that the Muslim world can achieve the same progress following the same pattern. That is why he suggests a close examination of this phenomenon. He believes that the masses have been deceived to believe that if the Muslims adopt science then they would progress as well, or, even take over leadership in the world again:

In our times, [science], requires to be studied and scrutinized because of people's deception that [science] is the cause of the European nations' progress and that non-application of [science] is the cause of Muslims' backwardness.⁷²

Şabrî explains the popularity of their short-sighted solutions by which the Muslims are deceived in the following way:

The secret of masses' indulgence in glorifying the experimentation in our time and giving it more importance than it deserves scientifically is because experimentation contributes a lot to materialistic sciences and industry which are the pillars of Western progress and dominance. These sciences

⁷⁰ Comparing the Islamic and Western terminology on the natural laws, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 355. The usual Qur'anic evidence for *sunan* is Fâtîr; 43. Şabrî, however, disagrees that this verse points to the physical laws of universe. For his discussion on this issue, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 117ff.

⁷¹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 108.

⁷² *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 367.

produce fruits in this life, while metaphysical sciences' —especially theology's fruits— are delayed till the next life. And masses are prone to prefer the instantaneous over the upcoming.⁷³

Finally, Şabrî accepts modern science as a set of helpful procedures and steps and as an efficient tool that explores material existence. Since it focuses on practical issues in life, its results are tentative, partial and piecemeal. He recognizes its role in the process of industrialization, mass production and military development in the West, but he is sceptical that a similar application of science may result in the same development and progress in the East. He is willing to integrate modern science in the *Kalāmī* philosophy of knowledge and place it immediately after common sense and reason but he is not ready to give it a foremost position. That is why he rejects a materialistic and positivistic understanding of science which project science as an exclusive way of knowing that subordinates all other ways. To Şabrî, accepting the materialistic and positivistic conception of science would lead to disruption of the accepted hierarchy of the *Kalāmī* paradigm of knowledge which can, as a consequence, seriously undermine human reasoning and thought, so much so, that the position of religion may be seriously threatened.⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid., v. 1, p. 240.

⁷⁴ For more discussion, see the chapter on Religion and Science in Part Two of this thesis.

Chapter III

Positivism

Claude Henri de Saint Simon (1760-1825) coined the term “positivism” but it did not acquire popularity and recognition until August Comte (1798-1857) with whom it became permanently associated.¹ He is also generally credited for defining the content and meaning of positivism and demarcating its general framework. Positivism gained considerable success in France and quickly reached Britain, where thinkers such as Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill and Thomas Huxley became its chief advocates. Since then, positivism has been immensely important in Western thought.² Positivism also emerged as an influential philosophical trend in the Late Ottoman Empire and Egypt.³ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu writes that:

Auguste Comte himself had high regard for the Turks and the Ottoman ruling élite as opposed to the other nations of the Middle East. In 1853 he even solicited the help of Resid Pasha to promote positivism in the Orient. Later, positivists trying to establish ties with Midhat Pasha received a warm response from him. However, these attempts led to no substantial results for the positivists.⁴

Except for a few, like Ahmed Rıza, who was a student of Pierre Laffite (1776-1854) and a member of international positivist movement,⁵ it would be difficult to point to the proponents of the exact philosophy of positivism in the Muslim East, yet it would be equally difficult to point to those who were not affected by some of its elements or who did not integrate some of its characteristics in their thought. In bringing positivism to the Ottoman Empire, “the major role

¹The major works of Comte are: *The Positive Philosophy* (1830-1842), *A General View of Positivism* (1848), *The System of Positive Polity* (1851-1854), *The Catechism of Positive Religion* (1852), *Appeal to Conservatives* (1855).

² For a good account of positivism in the 19th century, see: W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century: An Essay in Intellectual History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963) and for its connection with the philosophy of the 20th century, see: David J. Petersen, *Revoking the Moral Order: The Ideology of Positivism and Vienna Circle* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999).

³ For more on positivism in the Late Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic, see: Murtaza Korlaelçi, *Pozitivizmin Türkiye’ye Girişi ve İlk Etkileri* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1986).

⁴ *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 202.

⁵ See: Ibid.

was nevertheless played by the Committee of Union and Progress through their contacts with the proponents of positivism in Europe.⁶ In Egypt, Şabrî identifies a number of positivists of which Farîd Wajdî⁷ and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal⁸ are most important. Interestingly, perhaps for personal reasons, Şabrî does not pay attention to Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's contribution to the spread and popularity of positivism there.⁹ The influence of positivism was so strong in Egypt that—in Şabrî's evaluation—even the criticism of Al-'Aqqād Maḥmūd al-'Abbās “could not shake its place in the hearts of great writers.”¹⁰

i. Meaning, Translation and Usage

The first issue that Şabrî takes up with positivism is its very name and how it is translated in Turkey and Egypt.¹¹ He does so not only because he thinks that understanding a terminology is crucial for any discussion but actually also because he is making an attempt to comprehend the essence of this new philosophical system from its title. The term positivism as such was unknown to him and his main reference, i.e. the classic Muslim learning, could not possibly contain it because positivism is, after all, a modern Western phenomenon. Being a new foreign term that became so popular and important perhaps required a technical discussion regarding its meaning, translation and usage. Moreover, as translated into Ottoman Turkish or Arabic languages, it acquired specific connotations which Şabrî wanted to clarify:

⁶ Berrak Burçak, *Science, A Remedy for all Ills: Healing “the Sick Man of Europe”: A Case for Ottoman Scientism* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton University, January 2005), pp. 19-20.

⁷ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 148, 159, 247.

⁸ See: *Ibid.*, and v. 2, p. 109. For more on his views about positivism, see: Charles D. Smith, *Islam and the Search for Social order in Egypt: A Biography of Muhammad Husayn Haykal* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983) and Israel Gershoni “The Return of the East: Muhammad Husayn Haykal's Recantation of Positivism,” in Moshe Ma'oz and Ilan Pappé, eds., *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from Within* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997), pp. 21-74.

⁹ See: Abdel Rashid Mahmoudi, “The Twilight of Positivism,” in his *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's Education: From the Azhar to the Sorbonne* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), pp. 151-175.

¹⁰ For Al-'Aqqād's criticism of positivism, see: *Allāh*, pp. 220-221. For more on Şabrî's evaluation, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 33-34 and v. 2, pp. 450-451ff.

¹¹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 407, 423.

The modern educated people in Egypt call it *al-falsafah al-ithbātīyyah* or *al-falsafah al-muthbitah*, as *al-falsafah al-waḍ'īyyah*. The Turks use the former term which is more appropriate, although positivism—which is the French original name for that philosophy—can be translated in both ways. The Turkish translation entails positive connotations for that philosophy as intended by its French author who founded it and named it like that, while *al-falsafah al-waḍ'īyyah* does not entail any distinctive meaning that makes this philosophy extraordinary. But it is still meeting the claim of its author because every philosophical trend must be *waḍ'īyy* which means established by a person or a group of philosophers.¹²

Al-waḍ'īyy here comes as opposite of *al-ilāhīyy* or divine and *al-samāwīyy* or revealed which is to say that this philosophical system was constructed by the human mind and that it is not a product of divine revelation or heavenly disclosure. According to Şabrî, *al-ithbātīyy* reflects positive intentions of the founder, while *al-waḍ'īyy* fits more into Islamic paradigm which divides systems, religious or otherwise, into heavenly-made i.e. *al-ilāhīyy* or *al-samāwīyy* and man-made or *al-waḍ'īyy*. Through the constant use of the former term, it seems that Şabrî preferred *al-ithbātīyy* over *al-waḍ'īyy*, probably because he felt that by using the latter he would be, in a way, biased against it, because, from the first impression that term relegates the system into the human frame, and as such, can never be, in Muslim mind, deserving proper sympathy and seriousness as revealed knowledge would. Furthermore, *al-waḍ'īyyah* also designates something that is “low” from the Arabic *al-waḍī*¹³ which is perhaps derogatory. The fact that Şabrî's mother tongue was Turkish may also have contributed a little to his choice.

From the other side, the proper understanding of the two terms: “positivism” and “positivists,” inevitably leads to the recognition of yet another problem, which has serious bearings on religion, philosophy and epistemology, namely the problem of exclusive reliance on the five senses and the material world in the process of realization, knowing and/or determining the truth. This issue occupied an important place in modern intellectual discourse in the Muslim World

¹² Ibid., v. 1, p. 148.

¹³ For a thorough etymological explanation of this term in Arabic language, see: *wad'a* entry in Ibn Manzūr's *Lisān al-'Arab* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, nd.), v. 52 pp. 4857-4861.

of which results and implications Şabırî was both suspicious and cautious. He comments:

There is a grave misunderstanding and a lot of discussion being initiated about those who call themselves positivists. The misunderstanding starts in fact from their very name; i.e. "positivists," claiming that they construct knowledge by relying on senses and experimentation, [and by] denying everything that is established through other ways and hence excluding it from the domain of knowledge.¹⁴

This aspect is perhaps crucial for Şabırî's preference of *al-ithbātīyy* over *al-wad'īyy*.

ii. Exposition and Criticism of the Law of Three Stages

Another issue that caught Şabırî's attention immediately after discussing different aspects of the term was Comte's well-known law of human progress or the law of three stages:

The school of positivist philosophy claims that the human spirit has gone through three stages. The first is theological, the second metaphysical and the third positive or scientific stage.¹⁵

Şabırî did not delve into detailed discussion of the first religious stage which Comte subdivided into three further categories i.e. fetishism, polytheism and monotheism except that he mentions the scholarly remark of his colleague Hamdi Yazır, that "the books of history of religions which were written by the westerners, consider fetishism to be the origin while monotheism as its subsequent evolution and development."¹⁶ This squarely contradicts the idea of the three

¹⁴ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 147. See following pages for a broader discussion of this matter.

¹⁵ Ibid., v. 1, p. 148. In Comte's own words: "From the study of the development of human intelligence, in all directions, and through all times, the discovery arises of a great fundamental law, to which it is necessarily subject, and which has a solid foundation of proof, both in the facts of our organization and in our historical experience. The law is this:—that each of our leading conceptions, each branch of our knowledge—passes successively through three different theoretical conditions: the Theological, or fictitious; the Metaphysical, or abstract; and the Scientific, or positive". *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1855), p. 26.

¹⁶ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 149.

Abrahamic religions i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam which believe that the first created man was a monotheist rather than a polytheist or even worse; a fetishist. The significance of quoting this statement from Hamdi Yazır lies in Şabrî's care to point out the core inconsistency between the assertions of modern religious studies and the beliefs of revealed religions. Although his discussion centred on the last scientific stage, its rationale was to disapprove the theory that the theological stage was the first, that it expired and that it had no validity or relevance in later stages. In addition to this, he wanted to prove that the religious stage itself could not have started from anything except monotheism.

When it comes to the discussion of specific characteristics of these stages, Şabrî remarks that "the first two stages are temporary and transitory while the last stage is perfect and stable."¹⁷ For Şabrî, this unequivocally meant that since the first stage was the theological stage and the second metaphysical one, then that means that the period of religion and metaphysics was merely a necessary transition in the progress of humanity towards its final goal of achieving the scientific stage, without having in fact any intrinsic value and importance for human existence in the subsequent stages. In a way, positivists acknowledged the role of religion and metaphysics in the past, hence that was not a bone of contention between them and Şabrî, but they did dispute the role of both of them in the so called scientific stage. Rather, according to him, theology, metaphysics and science go hand in hand not only in the time framework of history and future or a certain view of human spiritual development but they are together as a matter of fundamental truth and universal principle also. The sharp disagreement was in the perception of the scientific stage and Şabrî thought that in the proper understanding of this stage lies the key to a complete understanding of the three stages altogether. Consequently, being the final stage and purpose of the positivist philosophy and its strongest argument, therein lies its destruction and collapse as well. Şabrî concludes that:

the human in this stage abandons the issues of the beginning *al-mabda'* and the resurrection *al-ma'ād* and devotes himself to the observation of the

¹⁷ Ibid., v. 1, p. 148 and v. 2, p. 110.

occurrences and their verifiable relations. Therefore, according to August Comte, the founder of this philosophy, religion and religious mode of knowledge should be discarded.¹⁸

The apparent contradiction between the positivist theory and the realities of the scientific stage was undeniable. Religion not only continued to exist in the age of science but its presence all over the world negates the positivist theory itself. Paradoxically, it proves that Comte was living more in a world of ideas which he denied than in a world of ground realities which he claimed to affirm.

Although Şabrî had many strong reasons to disapprove the law of three stages, he, apparently, preferred to choose some of the following arguments which were closely related to religion, his main area of interest. These arguments tell a lot about Şabrî's understanding of positivism. They also tell us something else; they depict Şabrî's view of the philosophic and religious integrity that philosophers and theologians, including Comte, should uphold.

Şabrî in fact wants to contradict the law of three stages with Comte's own attempt to create a new religion. Faced with personal problems at a later stage of his life, Comte perhaps sought emotional comfort in founding a new religion of humanity. This attempt was never taken seriously in the West except by a negligible minority. According to Şabrî, the impact of the idea of having a new religion was limited to some circles of royalty only.¹⁹ Şabrî agrees with Paul Jean who says:

however crude and however unphilosophical it may be, the religion of A. Comte is sufficient to disprove the law according to which the idea of religion represents a lower stage in the evolution of man.²⁰

Other Western scholars agree with Şabrî's contention as well. Gertrud Lenzer in his introduction to the edited translation of Comte's essential writings remarks that:

¹⁸ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 148; v. 2, p. 110.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 149.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 149. Cf. *A History of the Problems of Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1902), v. 2, p. 342.

it is particularly in this sense that the religion of humanity of Comte's later years —with its doctrines, apparatus of a cult, sociocratic clergy, and A. Comte himself as its high priest— became, for want of an adequate analysis, an embarrassment for many who otherwise quite happily followed the Comte of the earlier *Cours*.²¹

Furthermore, he says that:

In 1865 Mill referred to the writings after the *Cours* as the "single anomaly in M. Comte's intellectual carrier" a remark that brings to mind Aron's "gallant" interpretation of history: Aron regards Comte's conception of the Religion of Humanity as the possible outcome of his love for Cothilde de Vaux" and, therefore, a "biographical accident."²²

In another instance, Şabrî considers that the Comtean call for the invention of a new religion had actually reverted the progress backward which is in contradiction with the general characteristics of the law of three stages which is supposed to be irreversible and thus a subsequent negation of the law itself. After the completion of the theological stage of which the pinnacle was the idea of monotheism, and after it had passed through the stage of metaphysical interpretation, and after it was immersed into scientific age, it again reverted to the initial fetish beliefs and practices of the beginning of the first stage, because Comte, with his new religion, did not intend to reinstate the worship of God but the worship of human beings, especially women. And this unambiguously contradicts the unilinear, irreversible progress which the law necessarily and essentially entails and promotes. Şabrî remarks on the introduction of positivistic religion and its immediate effects on the law of three stages in clear-cut words: "but the religion of the positivists sees the contrary; that idolatry rose due to the increase of desires, although the origin was monotheism."²³

²¹ *Auguste Comte and Positivism: The Essential Writings* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1998), p. xi.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 149.

Continuing to argue in a somewhat different context, Şabrî agrees with the criticism of his colleagues addressed to some modernists in the Muslim world who believed that the age of idol worship has come to an end:

the contention of the modernists who allow taking pictures on the pretext that the idol-worship will never return back is contradicted with the worship of women in the positivist religion which was founded in the most advanced period of the West.²⁴

Having in mind the law of three stages, Şabrî quoted Comte in the description of the new religion:

In spite of that, the leader of the positivists founded a new trinitarian religion. He says: "its hypostasis are the great being which is the humanity, and the great fetish which is the earth; and the great way which is the space surrounding the Earth. The greatest idol has sacrificed itself and presented itself with humility in exchange and for the sake of the greatest being. Therefore, we are bound to it with worship and gratitude. But, the representative of the highest perfection is the human and he deserves to be worshipped. Moreover, the human is better than God and more deserving to be worshipped because He benefits from our love and because He needs our service and because He does not encourage us with the reward of compensation for the observance. Woman especially deserves to be worshipped because she is the means for the realization of the hopes of friendship and love and because she is the symbol of humanity. The mother symbolizes the past; the wife symbolizes the present and the daughter symbolizes the future."²⁵

Şabrî further adds that "this religion has eighty four holidays to celebrate the women annually and nine sacred rituals."²⁶

Stressing the importance of Christianity which deeply affected the consciousness of the modern Western thinkers, in spite of the fact that they had forsaken it and substituted it for different forms of unbelief and atheism, Şabrî comments that "in spite of it being the latest atheistic philosophy and the most

²⁴ Ibid., v. 1, p 148.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., v. 1, p. 148.

vicissitude one [...] ²⁷ in sticking to the trinity, there is a proof that the Western philosophers—even the atheists among them—still think about Christianity. ²⁸

Interestingly enough, this view coincides with opinions of some contemporary philosophers, like Edward W. Said who unequivocally accuses a number of leading thinkers of the nineteenth century of creating modern myths. He categorically says that:

No less than Schlegel, Wordsworth, and Chateaubriand, Auguste Comte—like Bouvard—was the adherent and proponent of a secular post-Enlightenment myth whose outlines are unmistakably Christian. ²⁹

It appears then that the idea of a new religion in the positivistic philosophy was interesting for Şabrî not only in its relation to the law of three stages but from other angles as well. The first one was that the positivists had denied the religious interpretation of the world and—paradoxically—the second that they could not deny the need for religion. Şabrî was advocating the presence of religion and its mode of knowledge not as one particular religion but religion as such, or religion as a principle different from science and philosophy. Thirdly, Şabrî seemed to have considered Comte's invention of a new religion as the best proof against his own law of three stages.

* * *

Another aspect of Şabrî's criticism is his view that Comte did not initiate his philosophy out of the blue. He heavily relied on the scientific authorities, philosophers of the Enlightenment period and the existing cultural climate of his time, so much so that "Comte did not create the idea of positivism; it was created by the scientific progress of his century." ³⁰ The authorities on which Comte heavily relied were of high scientific calibre such as Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei, Rene Descartes, Giordano Bruno and even Roger Bacon (1220-1292). But

²⁷ Ibid., v. 1, p. 247.

²⁸ Ibid., v. 1, p. 149.

²⁹ *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 115.

³⁰ Angèle Kremer-Marietti, "Positivism," in Mircea Eliade, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987), v. 11, p. 458.

amazingly, none of these authorities ever denied the need for religion or questioned the existence of God which is the chief article of faith at least in Abrahamic religions. Moreover, in Şabrî's view, science neither opposed reason nor did it oppose religion. So, the question is now: how can positivists claim something like that when the scientists —on whom Comte relied— did not claim it? Therefore, to disapprove Comte, Şabrî proved that those scientists were religious people and that they did not intend to oppose religion with their scientific contribution. Additionally, science, as proposed by them, did not inherently entail any antireligious elements, and even if it did, it would have been wrong. Hence, the atheistic claims are necessarily positivistic claims not coming from the scientists or from science itself. Even some leading positivists such as Herbert Spencer admitted the existence of the "unknowable." For Şabrî, the unknowable means God.³¹

The Westerners have not followed this path of criticizing Comte's philosophy. Religion was so unpopular among the intellectuals in the West that there was no profit in constructing a major argument based on it. For Şabrî, this was an important aspect of the criticism. Other than that, Şabrî did not neglect other ways of criticizing positivism. As a matter of fact it seems that his main objective in the book of *al-Mawqif* was to refute positivism.

iii. Positivism, Science and Philosophy

Turning to the issues which are not —strictly speaking— of religious nature, Şabrî exposed the positivistic interpretation of science and philosophy and their different connotations.

The core issue, according to Şabrî, seems to be the question of epistemology and existence. There was a tendency, in Western thought, of widening the importance and scope of material existence and decreasing the scope and importance of immaterial existence, or to put it in other words: increase of

³¹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 232, 448-449. See also: Spencer, Part One: "The Unknowable," in his *First Principles* (London: Watts & Co., 1946 [1937]).

importance of senses at the expense of reason. Comte, in his philosophy, preferred the material over the immaterial. Accordingly, the only valid objects for study, investigation and knowledge were—in fact—the material tangible objects which ultimately constitute the nature. Nature, therefore, becomes an infinite source of knowledge and laws which can be, furthermore, translated and applied in the realm of ethics, behaviour and social organization. Since the observation and study of nature cannot be accomplished but through the five senses, they seem to usurp the leading role of reason. From the positivist point of view, this is true in science, philosophy, religion and social sciences. In fact it is true for everything. This constellation of relations between senses, reason and heart produces a kind of subjectivism mixed with clear material tendencies which Şabrî strongly opposed.

Şabrî reflects on these relations through discussions on materialism, science, philosophy and religion. He strongly argues that positivism would not be possible without materialism and that any attempt to separate them would be unsuccessful. It is clear, however, that the positivist account of materialism is somewhat different from the materialist, but it seems that Şabrî does not bother much to differentiate between the two. That is perhaps because Şabrî treated materialism as an overwhelming phenomenon in the modern Western thought, rather than an independent set of ideas exposed by a certain thinker or a school of thought. Commenting on Farid Wajdî's view on materialism and positivism, Şabrî concludes in the classical style of *Kalām*:

and it is surprising that *al-Ustādh* [Wajdî], [...] wants to abolish the negative³² materialistic ideology and—at the same time—does not spare effort to safeguard his negative positivistic ideology while not knowing that it is necessarily related to the ideology of materialists which he wants to annihilate. If one of the two is to be annihilated, it necessarily follows that the other should be annihilated too. Similarly, if one of them is to be upheld, the other should be upheld as well. Henceforth, it does not necessarily follow that *al-Ustādh* can uphold materialism and fight against it concurrently.³³

³² By *negative* here he means the ideology that *negates* metaphysics.

³³ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 434.

Philosophy cannot study nature directly because it does not have the tools to do so, neither has it got the method for that. Science can take up that task and approach the study of nature. But since nature is material, therefore science is partial and changeable and it is not capable of producing any definite results. It is always liable to changes and amendments. In Şabrî's view, there is no problem if science is like that, but the problem arises when positivism claims that science is the exclusive path of knowledge, negating all other paths. In return, the key tool for understanding in positivism becomes senses not reason, which is absurd because the tool of understanding is reason and not senses.

The role of reason is therefore limited to the partial results of science. And instead of being free to think in both the material and immaterial spheres, reason is imprisoned in the sphere of the physical only. Consequently, if reason trespasses the boundaries of the material and breaks into the immaterial sphere, that is regarded as unreasonable and dismissed as irrelevant, incorrect and wrong. The whole idea is epitomized in the following axiom popularized by Farîd Wajdî whom Şabrî considers as the representative of positivist philosophy in the East: "everything rational that is not verifiable by senses is not countable."³⁴

Accordingly, positivism denies the existence of whatever lies behind physical facts. It denies the existence of any intelligible forces outside matter. It denies any method that is not reducible to the scientific method. Furthermore, it rejects the cognitive value of philosophical inquiry.

The problem in accepting this kind of argument for Şabrî lies in the fact that religion is completely based on immaterial metaphysical principles that cannot be verified scientifically and philosophically from the positivistic perspective. Moreover, reason is limited to the physical realm and this altogether abolishes the centuries long accumulated intellectual history of Islam which relied on reason to establish the truth of its faith and its major articles/doctrines. According to Şabrî, if these classical Islamic sciences are dismissed, religion will collapse and there will

³⁴ Ibid., v. 1, p. 26, 407.

be no firm grounds to uphold it anymore because modern science is not sufficient to establish the necessity of religion and its cardinal beliefs. To limit reason to the physical sphere only means—in fact—to reject the metaphysical philosophy and deny its cognitive value. Therefore, to limit the jurisdiction of reason means in fact to withdraw reason from religion. And if that is done, there will be no religion.

To sum this up, according to Ṣabrī's view of positivism, the material tangible facts are the only possible objects of investigation and knowledge. Therefore, science is the only valid knowledge and the scientific methodology the only valid way. Essentially, philosophy is attached to science and does not possess a different method other than the scientific one. Philosophy's task is to find general principles of science and use them as guides for human conduct and basis for social organization. Consequently, positivism denies the existence of intelligibility of forces that go beyond the concrete material facts. It denies any kind of metaphysics and rejects any procedure or investigation that is not reducible to the scientific method. Furthermore, it rejects the cognitive value of a philosophical study and weakens the position of religion to the point of its elimination.

* * *

Finally, the problem that Ṣabrī sees in positivism is that it has chosen an awkward way of approaching the solution of our intellectual, ethical, social and other similar values. Positivism has chosen the physical existence of nature as the sole source of knowledge and limited itself to its material manifestations. The tool that it has chosen to investigate nature, i.e. science, is imperfect and limited by its own methodology and partiality. It cannot lead us to perfect knowledge. However, nature itself is a set of laws that are unchangeable but it does not mean that they are unbreakable. That proves that they are not absolute and hence not necessary. Nevertheless, it does not mean that nature cannot be a source of our knowledge and reordering of our lives, but it certainly means that it cannot be the sole one, especially due to the presence of reason whose conclusions are necessary, compulsory and impenetrable by anything, including the miracles, which can only

temporarily disrupt the order of nature but which cannot disrupt the order of reason.

The other problem that Şabrî clearly sees in positivism is its pretension to overtake the leading position from religion in its intellectual, ethical, social and other ordering of human life. That would certainly play havoc with the existing religious orders and practices and hence inevitably lead to a lot of disorder and mischief. In the end, one feels that there is a resounding echo throughout his exposition: how can a humanly devised way of life, based on limited sources of knowledge and flawed methodology be more suitable to the human than the divinely guided principles supported by necessary rulings of the unmistakable reason and senses subordinated to it?

Chapter IV

Scepticism

In various contexts, Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī employs more than one Arabic equivalent to denote what is commonly known in the Western intellectual heritage as scepticism. There are at least four terms which he uses frequently, namely *al-raybiyyah*, *al-shukkāk*, *al-ḥisbāniyyah* and *al-Sūfistā'iyyah*. Less frequent is *al-iḥtimāliyyah*. *Al-raybiyyah*¹ comes from the Arabic *al-rayb* which stands for doubt.² Significantly, *al-rayb* is a term used in the Qur'ān in a number of places.³ The same is the case with *al-shukkāk* which is derived from Arabic *al-shakk*⁴ which also means doubt like *al-rayb*.⁵ Unlike *al-raybiyyah* and *al-shukkāk*, the term *al-ḥisbāniyyah* is less common in Arabic literature, but Ṣabrī widely employs it and mentions it even in one of the rare headings in his *Magnum Opus*. It is derived from the Arabic *al-ḥisbān* which literally means "idea" while in *Kalām* terminology it is equal to *al-ẓann*. It stands in the middle between *al-yaqīn* or certainty from one side and *al-shakk* from the other.⁶ *Al-iḥtimāliyyah* is yet another term but he mentions it only once.⁷ It comes from the Arabic *al-iḥtimāl* which means "probability". It has got no Qur'ānic grounding related to the subject discussed here. *Al-Sūfistā'iyyah* is the arabized version of Sophists, the ancient Greek philosophical sceptical sect from the pre-Socratic period.

Since Ṣabrī is basically a *Mutakallim*, it would be beneficial to note that the *Mutakallimūn* hierarchically categorize *al-'ilm* into three major levels or as they call it *marātib al-'ilm*, namely: *al-shakk*, *al-ẓann* and *al-yaqīn*. Al-Jurjānī (1340-1413) gives a substantial definition of *al-shakk*:

¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 21 and p. 46.

² Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, v. 3, pp. 1788-1789.

³ To survey these Qur'ānic verses, the best solution is to consult the root of *shīn-kāf-kāf* in Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī's *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufaḥras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, h. 1364), pp. 386-387.

⁴ Ibn Manẓūr, v. 4, pp. 2309-2310.

⁵ See: 'Abd al-Bāqī's *Al-Mu'jam*, the root of *rā-yā-bā*, p. 329.

⁶ See: *Maṭṭi'at al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 242-245.

⁷ See: Ibid.

It is the wavering between two contradictories in absence of a proof which makes one outweigh the other in the sight of one who doubts. It is [also] said that *al-shakk* is that which has two equal extremes [i.e.] the position between two things where the heart does not incline towards any one of them. So, if one of them prevails but does not overcome the other, it is called *al-zann*, while if the other is discarded then it is the dominant *al-zann* which is equivalent to *al-yaqīn*.⁸

Al-zann has also got negative connotations in the Qur'ān⁹ and its definition by Al-Jurjānī is:

the prevalent belief which does not exclude the possibility of contradiction. It can be also called as *al-yaqīn* and *al-shakk*. And it is also said that *al-zann* is one of the extremes of *al-shakk* that is the prevalent one.¹⁰

While the definition of *al-yaqīn* is:

literally, it is *al-ilm* which does not contain any doubt. And as a terminology, it is the belief that something is like that with conviction that it is not possible to be otherwise except like that, according to the reality, and with impossibility of [its] change.¹¹

These are a few basic definitions related to the subject of scepticism in the academic traditions of *al-Kalām* which can assist us in determining a preliminary view of Ṣabirī's perception of scepticism as a general problem of philosophical thought, irrespective of its Western or Eastern origins and later developments and implications.¹²

i. Scepticism in the Antiquity and Middle Ages

The roots of scepticism of the modern intellectual West can be traced back to the ancient Greek heritage which abounded with sceptic notions and philosophical tendencies and systems. Greek scepticism was treated in the Islamic

⁸ Al-Jurjānī's full name is 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Sharīf, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1990), p. 134.

⁹ *Āl 'Imrān*, 154; *al-Nisā'*, 157; *Al-Hujurat*, 12; *al-Najm*, 28. For the rest of the Qur'ānic verses, it is best to consult the index of Qur'ān, root: *za-nūn-nūn*, pp. 439-440.

¹⁰ *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*, p. 149.

¹¹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 280.

¹² For more *Kalāmī* definitions of these terms, see: Muḥammad 'Alī al-Tahānawī, *Mawsū'at Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-'Ulūm wa 'l-Funūn*, ed. Rafiq al-'Ajam, 2 vols. (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1996), *al-shakk*, v. 1, pp. 1038-1039; *al-zann*, v. 2, pp. 1153-1154; and *al-yaqīn*, v. 2, pp. 1812-1813.

scholarship in which Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī was reared and from which platform he launched his discussions and arguments. Therefore, for the purpose of tracing that historical evolution of ideas, perhaps, it would be useful to mention the most prominent personalities and to recapture the most influential ideas. Ṣabrī also followed the same methodology in dealing with this particular subject.¹³ However, he dwelt on scepticism's history not for its own sake but because he believed that modern sceptical attitude cannot be properly comprehended without linking it to its ancient predecessors.¹⁴ His study of the history of scepticism, therefore, does not go into too many details rather it focuses on the milestones, trying to establish connections between the ancient sceptics and its modern manifestations among leading philosophers, perhaps chiefly Immanuel Kant, whom he considers as the most influential philosopher in the West in modern times, David Hume, whom he considers as the true reviver of scepticism in the Modern Age,¹⁵ and Descartes who, because of his methodological doubt, is "the most misunderstood philosopher among the Western educated élites in Egypt".¹⁶ There are two more, perhaps not less important reasons which made Ṣabrī go through the history of scepticism. The first one is that it is a kind of precondition to correct understanding of the relation between science, reason and religion and the second being that the reader may not find the history of scepticism provided to him elsewhere briefly and succinctly.¹⁷

At the very outset of this historical survey, Ṣabrī quotes Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles, apparently agreeing with them that the basic issue that underlies the entire philosophical quest is the issue of certainty of knowledge.¹⁸ Janet and Séailles recognize three major philosophical trends in this regard: *al-īqāniyyah* or the dogmaticism, *al-ḥisbāniyyah* or the scepticism and *al-m'anawīyyah* or idealism.¹⁹

¹³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 234. Cf. "Scepticism and Certitude," in *A History of the Problems of Philosophy*, v. 2, pp. 93-146. This book is significant because it was one of the major sources on which Ṣabrī heavily relied.

¹⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 244-245.

¹⁵ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 234.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 211.

¹⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 234.

¹⁸ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 234.

¹⁹ See: *A History of the Problems of Philosophy*, v. 2 pp. 93-94.

Ṣabri adds two more categories: *al-sha'niyyah* and *al-tadribiyyah* or empiricism, believing that, in one way or the other, all can be traced back to scepticism except the first one.

Pre-Socratic personalities who contributed to the establishment of scepticism are indeed many.²⁰ Fundamentally, they were concerned with observing and explaining the physical world but when they started comparing their sensual results with rational deductions based on the senses, the results contradicted and the first glances of doubt emerged.²¹ For instance, Heraclites' (c. 535–475 B.C.E.) main contention that everything is in "flux", indicates his understanding about human inability to discover any fixed, immutable truth. Cratylus (c. 5th century B.C.E.), went a step further and thought that since everything is changing, there is no possibility of establishing any kind of communication because the speaker, the auditor and the words instantly change. Xenophanes (c. 560–470 B.C.E.) doubted in the existence of any valid criterion of true knowledge and its recognition even if it existed. Parmenides (c. 515–450 B.C.E.), Democritus (c. 460–370 B.C.E.) and Sophists such as Gorgias (c. 483–376 B.C.E.) who concluded that "Nothing exists"; "If anything did exist it could not be known"; "If it was known, the knowledge of it would be incommunicable." Not to mention the famous Protagoras (c. 490–420 B.C.E.) and his axiom that "Man is the measure of all things".²²

The kind of intellectual atmosphere that sceptics created may be illustrated by Socrates (470–399 B.C.E.) whose main task was, perhaps, to refute error rather than impart knowledge.²³ He successfully used sceptics' strongest weapon i.e. the principle of contradiction, against themselves.²⁴ Similarly, it seems that Plato

²⁰ For an overview of scepticism in the Greek period, see: Charlotte L. Stough, *Greek Scepticism: A Study in Epistemology* (Berkeley: University of California, 1969).

²¹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 236–237.

²² *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 237.

²³ On the encounters between Socrates and sceptics. see: Paul Woodruff, "Socrates Among the Sophists" and Richard Bett, "Socrates and Scepticism," in Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar, eds. *A Companion to Socrates* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2006), pp. 36–48 and pp. 298–315 respectively.

²⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 237.

understood Protagoras' axiom that "Man is the measure of all things" as a denial of absolutely true knowledge.

Scepticism as a philosophical methodology was first formulated by the leaders of Plato's Academy during the period between c. 280 and 80 B.C.E. after which it reverted to Platonic dogmatism.²⁵ Şabrî puts it in a similar time framework i.e. the period of Aristotle.²⁶ They seem to have emphasized on Socrates' famous remark "All that I know is that I know nothing". Arcesilaus (c. 317-242 B.C.E.) and Carneades (c. 215-130 B.C.E.) developed their arguments against both Epicureans and Stoics and claimed that there was no criterion for distinguishing between the true and false or illusory perceptions. For them, it showed that no assertions beyond the immediate experience were certain.²⁷ When the Stoics criticized Arcesilaus that if scepticism was true then life would not be possible, Arcesilaus replied that practical life relied on half truth. To Şabrî some Western philosophers were saying the same thing in modern times under the leadership of Hegel, and their new philosophy seemed to be borrowed from ancient Greek philosophy.²⁸

While dealing with scepticism in the Modern Age, Şabrî preferred to take side with the renowned Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle against sceptics and tried rekindling their tradition in the first half of the twentieth century. His method was also similar to theirs because on a lot of instances it appears that Şabrî was busier in proving the falsity of sceptic claims and refuting them rather than imparting true knowledge; just as they did centuries ago. Similarly, also because Socrates, Plato and Şabrî believed that true knowledge existed and that it was possible, with interesting details: Şabrî believed that it was stored in the ancient sciences and the way of ancient philosophers, while Socrates purported that it was in us, or, as Plato argued, that it was in the immutable ideas. Broadly speaking, Şabrî would not disagree with both of them in their essential

²⁵See: *A History of the Problems of Philosophy*, v. 2 pp. 104ff.

²⁶ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 237.

²⁷ See: *Ibid*, v. 2, p. 243.

²⁸ *Ibid*, v. 2, p. 242.

position against the sceptics and sophists. However, he was adding a new dimension to their position, namely, the tradition of established rational sciences of the past and the general acceptance which they enjoyed for so many centuries.

On the basis of close historical analysis of the evolution of philosophical ideas, Şabrî opines that the major contribution of sceptics of that time was discovery of the principle of contradiction and their insistence on it.²⁹ That eventually compelled other philosophers to carefully review their methods and ways of reasoning. As far as scepticism's negative contribution is concerned, Şabrî mainly sees it in their view that achievement of certain knowledge is impossible.³⁰ According to him, sceptics were right when they observed the inconsistencies and contradictions in the ideas of philosophers but they were not right in deducing from it that neither of their positions was correct because that would have consequently lead to regarding their observations of different positions as incorrect in the first place. So, when they doubted in the possibility of certain knowledge, they doubted in everything else including the impossibility of the contradiction itself, i.e. that no contradiction was possible; which, in fact, leads to self destruction of scepticism.³¹

This analysis obviously shows that although Şabrî was harshly critical of scepticism yet, at the same time, he knew how to discover its positive aspects and appreciate them accordingly.³²

In the Roman period, the main centre of sceptical activity shifted from the Academy to the Pyrrhonian School, probably connected with the methodic school of medicine in Alexandria. They followed the example of Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360-270) whose teachings started to be theoretically formalized by Aenesidemus and reached its pinnacle in Sextus Empiricus' (c. 150-225) *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. The significance of Sextus is that he succeeded in summarizing the major arguments

²⁹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 237.

³⁰ See: Ibid, v. 2, p. 237.

³¹ See: Ibid, v. 2, pp. 237-238.

³² On how scepticism influenced the emergence of epistemology, see Jim Stone, "Scepticism as a Theory of Knowledge," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 60, No. 3. (May, 2000), pp. 527-545.

which would keep reappearing in the world intellectual history throughout, both in the East and the West.³³

During the Christian dominated Middle Ages in the West, St. Augustine battled with scepticism and wrote his *Contra Academicos*.³⁴ This is significant because for the first time perhaps, scepticism encountered a religious system, an experience that would recur in the Islamic framework but with different connotations, consequences and solutions. According to historians, it was the last major attempt before the Renaissance to come to grips with sceptical questions in epistemology in the Western hemisphere. The only way to completely overcome scepticism, in St. Augustine's view, was by revelation. The solution of St. Augustine remained relevant in the Modern Age because there was a visible tendency to confirm the correctness of his view, rather than working out philosophical solutions to counter scepticism. This approach influenced St. Aquinas whom Şabrî holds responsible for developing this kind of solution which leads to depression of reason and belittling of its importance and place.³⁵

All in all, Şabrî summarizes the various phases through which Western scepticism went, concluding that the Western philosophy was ridden by scepticism and that it could not get rid of it except in recent times:³⁶

Greek philosophy started off with agnostic scepticism. Heraclites, Parmenides, Empedocles, Democritus and Anaxagoras agreed on denying the trustworthiness of senses. Then, the philosophy of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle abolished it. After a while, it again recovered, and its most important personalities were Pyrrho and Carneades. Both of these trends are known as ancient scepticism. After that came the theory of pseudo-certainty by Antiochus and Cicero and then came the neo-scepticism of Ptolemy, Deogerus, Aenesidemus, Agrippa and Sextus Empiricus till Christianity emerged and introduced faith as the basis of certainty, and then

³³ For a recent defense of Pyrrhonism against modern attacks, see Bredo C. Johnsen, "On the Coherence of Pyrrhonian Scepticism," in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 4. (Oct., 2001), pp. 521-561.

³⁴ See: John Heil, "Augustine's Attack on Scepticism: *The Contra Academicos*," in *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 65, No. 1. (Jan., 1972), pp. 99-116; Gerard O'Daly, "The Response to Scepticism and Mechanisms of Cognition," in Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 159-171.

³⁵ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 218.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 22.

Descartes abrogated it, as we have already explained. Then, scepticism returned after the period of Descartes —the lone saviour of *al-'ilm* from doubt— and it is called recent scepticism or the scepticism of Hume. The critical philosophy is not so far away from it although Kant became famous for relinquishing *al-'ilm* from scepticism.³⁷

ii. The Greek Sceptical Heritage in the Classical Muslim Sources

This Greek sceptical heritage, sometimes mixed with Syriac accretions and readymade solutions, was dealt with in Muslim scholarship chiefly in the field of *Ilm al-Kalām* and *Al-Falsafah*, and to a lesser extent in the disciplines of Islamic law, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, and *Al-Taṣawwuf*. Due to direct access to the classical sources, Muslims became aware of ancient sceptical currents and critically analyzed them, so much so, that their responses became incorporated in Muslim intellectual heritage. This fact is significant especially if we want to trace Ṣabrī's perception of modernity in general and scepticism in particular.

The famous compendium of *Al-Shahristānī* (d. 538 H.E.) *Al-Milal wa 'l-Nihāl* comprising of Greek's main philosophical trends and world religions is perhaps the best example of Muslim scholarship. *Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār's al-Mughnī*, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa 'l-Mutaakhirīn*, Al-Ghazālī's numerous books especially the renowned *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*. Their discussions and criticisms of scepticism constitute a major intellectual contribution in this regard. These authors and their books were the primary sources of studying *Kalām* and nourishing the Muslim intellect in the subsequent ages. Their significance for Muslim scholarship never seems to diminish even in the age of modernity and predominantly in the case of Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī.

However, it is not intended here to give a full account, or a detailed survey of the Muslims' encounter with the doubts and arguments of ancient sceptics. Rather, an illustration of certain problems involving sceptical instances that might have had a direct influence on Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī would be more practical for the present study.

³⁷ Ibid., v. 2, p. 215. See: Footnote no. 1.

Perhaps, the most influential sort of literature that developed within *Kalām* in its later phases was the booklets that in a congested form summarized the principles of Islamic creed usually according to a certain theological school of thought. They were easy to memorize but became difficult to understand for later generations so that a whole new trend of literature emerged to explain them. That literature can broadly be categorized into *al-shurūḥ* or interpretations, *al-ḥawashī* or footnotes, *al-ta'liqāt* or comments and *al-taqrīrāt* or reports, and they were taught to the students as text books. To mention a few only, Al-Ṭaḥāwī's (d. 331 H.E.) *al-'Aqīdah*, Al-Ījī's *al-'Aqā'id al-Aḍudiyyah*, Al-Ghazālī's (d. 505 H.E.) *Al-Iqtisād fī 'l-I'tiqād*, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's (d. 671 H.E.) *Tajrīd al-I'tiqād*, Ibn Taymiyyah's (d. 728 H.E.) *Al-'Aqīdah al-Wāsiṭiyyah* and perhaps the most famous one *Al-'Aqā'id al-Nasafiyyah* written by Abu Ḥafṣ Najm al-Dīn 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Māturīdī (d. 537) and explained by Sa'd al-Dīn Mas'ūd b. 'Umar al-Taftāzānī al-Ash'arī (d. 793). So, for instance, the opening sentence of this last compendium and many others is "the reality of things is constant and their comprehension is possible in opposition to the Sophists".³⁸ It signifies the fruits of decades' old intellectual encounters between the *Mutakallimūn* and their sceptical opponents. Their final result found its way in the booklets that were written primarily for religious guidance for beginners or as their author's last testimony and the sum of his personal beliefs or a school of thought that he belonged to. The importance of the above quoted sentence increases keeping in view that Ṣabrī belonged to the *Māturīdī* theological school and that Al-Nasafī's *'Aqīdah* was —and still is— a compulsory reading for every student of *al-Kalām* especially of the *Māturīdī* school of thought. That is why it should not be strange that Ṣabrī quotes it among the books that contributed to the forming of his intellectual genius and drafting his theological positions.

The commentaries increased in the form of *al-shurūḥ*, *al-ḥawashī*, *al-ta'liqāt* and *al-taqrīrāt* and they represent a summary of Muslim scholarship on scepticism

³⁸ *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-Nasafiyyah*, ed. Aḥmad Hijāzī al-Saqā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyyah), 1988), p. 1. Cf. *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 23.

and an excellent intellectual exercise. For example Al-Taftāzānī while explaining the text of *Al-Nasafiyyah*, says about the Sophists:

Some of them deny the reality of things and claim it to be illusion and false imagination, and they are *al-'inādiyyah*. And some of them deny the stability of the things and claim that they follow the convictions, so, if we believe something to be the essence, it is the essence and if we believe that something is an accident it is an accident, and they are *al-'indiyyah*. And some of them deny the possibility of knowing anything and claim that they are in doubt and in doubt about their doubt and so on, and they are *al-lā'adriyyah*.³⁹

Irrespective of the question whether these three categories existed historically as three separate entities or not, the analytical capacity manifested herewith is of enormous significance, because it was not on the basis of historical evidence but on the basis of their different views that al-Taftāzānī arranged them into these categories.

The other example is that of, what Muslim scholars call, ancient Hindu group: *Al-Sumaniyyah*, who denied all theoretical knowledge and accepted only the knowledge that comes through the five senses,⁴⁰ a view that is very much similar to the materialistic, scientific and positivistic notions in the Modern Age. Even *Al-Hashawiyyah* tendency among certain Muslim theologians may be regarded as sceptic because of their denial of all the knowledge that is not coming directly from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.⁴¹ Intelligible answers for these kinds of arguments can be found in many books of *Kalām*. Perhaps al-Baghdādī's *Uṣūl*, al-Āmidī's *al-Abkār* and al-Ghazālī's *Iljām al-'Awām* would serve as good examples. What is to be stressed here is that their discussions form the core of Ṣabī's views on scepticism. So, as modern scepticism updated the arguments of its Greek ancestors so did Ṣabī

³⁹ *Sharḥ al-Nasafiyyah*, pp. 88-92.

⁴⁰ See: 'Abd al-Qāhir Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Istanbul: Maṭbat al-Dawlah, 1928), pp. 10-11; Sayf al-Dīn Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-Marām fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*, ed. Ḥasan Maḥmūd 'Abd al-Laṭīf (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A'lā li 'l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1971), p. 13. For modern studies, see: Modassir Ali "Al-Sumaniyyah," in *Al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah*, Vol. 39, No. 3. (July, 2004), pp. 159-175.

⁴¹ See: Ḥasan al-Shafī'ī, *Al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsāt 'Ilm al-Kalām*, 2nd ed. (Karachi: Idārat al-Qur'ān wa 'l-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah, 2001), pp. 68-72.

reformulate the views of his ancestors and applied them accordingly in the new situation.

Yet another issue remained a bone of contention among the *Mutakallimūn*, and it is closely related to scepticism in the Muslim World:

It would be interesting to mention one of the intriguing issues in the classical *Kalām*, namely, *awwal al-wājib 'alā' al-mukallaf* or the first duty of an adult; whether it is *al-ma'rifah* itself, or *al-nazar* that leads to it, or the first parts of *al-nazar* or *al-shakk*, or doubt that induces *al-nazar*? Here, *al-shakk* stands for intentional methodological doubt or tension that calls for investigation, clarification and removal of doubt in matters of belief.⁴²

This paragraph perfectly captures the crux of the matter in the issue of *Awwal al-wājib 'alā' al-mukallaf*. Paradoxically, what is very clear here is that doubt, although a methodological one, came to be regarded by some Muslim theologians as the first duty of every healthy adult in his/her realization of God. But, Şabrī is not ready to accept that doubt is the first duty for the *mukallaf* and considers it as an isolated view of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī al-Mu'tazilī (888-933) which does not represent, in his view, the position of the mainstream of *Mutakallimūn*.⁴³

This methodological doubt perhaps culminated in Al-Ghazālī's *Al-Munqidh min al-dalāl* which —according to some researchers— found its way into Descartes' *Meditations*.⁴⁴ If true, that may be regarded as a positive influence of Muslim thought on modern Western thought. However, Şabrī does not agree with Al-Ghazālī in his "rejection of reliance on both sensualities and rationalities which assist in the acquisition of the certainty"⁴⁵ although he is very sympathetic with Descartes' treatment of scepticism. Şabrī categorically says that al-Ghazālī "is not the proof of Islam [clearly alluding to his official title *Hujjat al-Islām* i.e. the Proof of Islam] in these statements that he made by the end of his life".⁴⁶ Moreover, Şabrī

⁴² Al-Shafi'i, p. 130.

⁴³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 270.

⁴⁴ See the preface to the second edition of Dr. Maḥmūd Ḥamdī Zaqqūq's *Al-Manhaj al-Falsafī bayn al-Ghazālī wa Dikart*, 2nd. ed. (Cairo: Maktabah al-Anglū al-Miṣriyyah, 1981), pp. 5-9.

⁴⁵ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 266.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

continues that "these statements do not represent something because of which, the respect which al-Ghazālī enjoys, should increase in our eyes, but it, in fact, negatively affects his reputation of the previous contribution that he made in his life".⁴⁷

Ṣabrī brings an interesting example quoted by Aḥmad Amīn in *al-Thaqāfah* who is supportive of al-Ghazālī in this regard "like the seeing in dream has no reality so maybe the seeing in awakesness is regarded as false imagination..."⁴⁸ which seems to be influenced by Descartes' *Meditations*.⁴⁹ Ṣabrī's response is that:

Suppose that 'Amr hits Zayd in his dream and Zayd revenges while awake. The case is brought in front of a judge so the beaten one says that he took revenge in the awakened state for what happened to him while in the state of dreaming. The judge replies that there is no revenge for what happens in dreams. So, the one who took revenge may reply: who can be sure that what we experience while awake has not got the confusions that we have in our dreams? The accepted and correct reality in Imām's view and those contemporary masters who became Sufis like him, lay in the third world manifested only to them and not to those who involve themselves in [the world of] sensualities and rationalities.⁵⁰

Therefore, there was an enormous tradition of dealing with scepticism in the Muslim intellectual heritage that was available to Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī which eventually helped him to form his perception of the modern sceptical notions and attitudes. That heritage provided him with an accurate overview of ancient sceptical notions, their criticisms and possible solutions. Naturally, this factor richly contributed to his able handling of the modern Western sceptical trends and prepared him for the encounter with new ideas. For many in the Muslim World, these ideas were new, but for Ṣabrī they were not so new because he recognized many old puzzles in them. This must have made him more convinced in the necessity of studying the *Ilm al-Kalām*, more so, because the leading Muslim

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ For more on this issue see an interesting article of Norman Malcolm, "Dreaming and Scepticism," in *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 65, No. 1. (Jan., 1956), pp. 14-37.

⁵⁰ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 266-267. Ṣabrī finishes this with a humorous wonder, whether they told these words while they were in their dreams or while awake.

thinkers of his time preferred abolition of *Kalām* even at the university level education in the Muslim World. Unfortunately, that attitude still persists in certain Muslim quarters.

iii. Scepticism in the Modern Age

As José R. Maria Neto remarks: "ancient scepticism was more influential in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than it had ever been before."⁵¹ Şabrî seems to support a similar view. He gives a brief description of the history of scepticism in which he clearly connects between the ancient and the modern and identifies the major personalities and trends:

[...] scepticism emerged in Greek philosophy, and was defeated, then it emerged again and then it was defeated again until it eventually migrated to the philosophy of the [modern] West where Descartes defeated it again, but it re-emerged with David Hume. However, this plague never entered the philosophy of Islam because our '*ulamā*' adopted what they adopted from the Greek philosophy without mixing it with the dirt of scepticism... and then al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh saw that this scepticism in the West took new clothes with Kant, then flourished in this form in the philosophy of Hegel who denied certainty in everything.⁵²

a) Descartes

Descartes locked himself in a bitter battle to defeat scepticism. Şabrî must have been delighted that Descartes used the tool of the adversary to defeat scepticism on its very ground namely, the doubt, because that method was one of the favourite ways of the *Mutakallimūn* to counterattack the opponent using his

⁵¹"Academic Scepticism in Early Modern Philosophy," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 58, No. 2. (Apr., 1997), p. 199. The ground work on the influence of ancient scepticism on modern philosophy was done by Charles B. Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1496-1533) and His Criticism of Aristotle* (The Hague, 1967); *Cicero Scepticus: A Study of the Influence of Academica in the Renaissance* (The Hague, 1972). Also, see: Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley, 1979); Richard A. Watson and James E. Force, eds. *The High Road to Pyrrhonism* (San Diego, 1980) *The Third Force in Seventeenth Century Philosophy* (Leiden, 1992). See also: Zachary S. Schiffman, "Montaigne and the Rise of Scepticism in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 45, No. 4. (Oct. - Dec., 1984), pp. 499-516; William M. Hamlin, "On Continuities between Scepticism and Early Ethnography; Or, Montaigne's Providential Diversity," in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 2. (Summer, 2000), pp. 361-379.

⁵² *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 304-305.

own strongest arguments which he could not deny or assumptions that do not need to be proved on his side.⁵³ This method was known to Ṣabrī and therefore it should not be strange that he approves it and couples the name of Descartes with flattering attributes such as the great, the unique etc.⁵⁴

According to Ṣabrī, there was a lot of confusion and misunderstanding, particularly in Egypt, about Descartes' methodological doubt which prompted him to elaborate the trend of scepticism and explain the position of the father of Modern Philosophy.⁵⁵ Among other reasons, Ṣabrī's reaction was triggered especially by the comments of the Grand Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Mārāghī who placed reason, science and ethics in opposition to religion. These comments were published in tens of Egyptian dailies before the departure of the student missions which went to France,⁵⁶ and the article published in the daily *al-Siyāṣah* stated that the students should doubt in everything they had learnt in al-Azhar.⁵⁷ This statement from the holder of the highest religious office in Egypt, Ṣabrī likened to the statements of Farah Antūn, Ṣabrī's and Muḥammad 'Abduh's chief opponent, unambiguously showing that Antūn's ideas found their way to the heart of al-Azhar although al-Azhar resisted them for decades.

So, Ṣabrī claims, that in Egypt, Descartes was wrongly considered the leader of sceptics and that his philosophy was mistakenly taken as sceptical philosophy.⁵⁸ Moreover, many believe that Descartes wanted to doubt in everything.⁵⁹ On the contrary, Ṣabrī explains, that "Descartes did not want to rise doubts about everything but that he only wanted to destroy the palaces that scepticism had build

⁵³ For more on the ways of *Mutakallimūn* to employ their arguments against their opponents see: Dr. Shafie, *al-Madkhal*, pp. 161-86 especially pp. 177-179.

⁵⁴ See for instance: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 212-213, 215.

⁵⁵ For an aspect of this controversy in the West, see: O. K. Bouwsma, "Des Cartes' Scepticism of the Senses," in *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 54, No. 216. (Oct., 1945), pp. 313-322; and an excellent analysis of Gail Fine, "Descartes and Ancient Scepticism: Reheated Cabbage?," in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 109, No. 2. (Apr., 2000), pp. 195-234.

⁵⁶ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 95, 106.

⁵⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 104.

⁵⁸ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 211.

⁵⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 21.

in the hearts",⁶⁰ and that he wanted to "doubt in everything that is not proved true",⁶¹ and "that it is not even scientific to doubt in everything".⁶² He even goes to say that to doubt in everything that has not been proved by argument is nothing special about Descartes; it is the method of every reasonable man.⁶³ Nevertheless, Ṣabrī believes that "Descartes is the first philosopher in the West who flattened the basis of doubt and distanced it from philosophy".⁶⁴ The ingeniousness of Descartes and the key of his success is that he used doubt, the only principle that sceptics do not deny, to destroy scepticism itself.⁶⁵

It is interesting how Ṣabrī demonstrates Descartes' argumentation. It is the typical way of the *Kalām* classic literature, and the traditional tone in which he presents one of the major modern Western philosophers:

He told them: "I doubt therefore I think" because doubt is a kind of perception i.e. the perception that fluctuates between confirmation and negation. "Then from this I realize that I exist" because if I did not exist, my doubting would have expired because it is included in my expiry. Thus I told you that I doubted and you sceptics have trusted my words." So, Descartes laid the foundation for knowledge in face of malady of the long-time doubt by extracting the cure from disease; and he reached first certainty, i.e. human's realization of his own existence, thus he says: "I think therefore I am" is a self-evident truth. Therefore, he was not someone who doubted in everything, as some claimed, but he was the one who extracted realized truths even from doubts.⁶⁶

Ṣabrī seems to agree with Paul Jean that this methodology was also implemented in the Middle Ages because Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* after asking the question about God's existence immediately answers: "so let our answer be negative", which, in fact, placed the existence of God in doubt. But the essential difference between Thomas Aquinas and Descartes is that the former

⁶⁰ Ibid., v. 2, p. 214.

⁶¹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 217.

⁶² Ibid., v. 2, p. 105.

⁶³ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 21.

⁶⁴ Ibid., v. 2, p. 214.

⁶⁵ See: Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

applied this method without feeling it while the latter did it intentionally. Even more than that, Descartes developed it into a well-defined philosophical system.⁶⁷

While further examining Descartes' historical contribution, Ṣabrī notes that he is the philosopher who succeeded in abolishing the duality of reason and faith which migrated to modern Western thought from the Middle Ages. According to him, Christianity introduced "faith-based-on-will" as the only solution to escape the nature of Greek philosophy which theologians found extremely problematic for a religious system. Christianity basically wanted to discredit reason to become safe from Greek sceptical mentality and criticism and to protect its principles of faith which were largely not attestable by reason. This gravely undermined the role of reason throughout the Middle Ages. But after Descartes reestablished the role of reason and restored confidence in it,⁶⁸ a new age dawned upon the West in which Christianity was dealt a huge blow. And those Muslim modernists who got an impression that Descartes' philosophy played havoc with their religion like it did with Christianity, committed at least two mistakes: the first that they misunderstood Islam and the second that they misunderstood reason and followed the Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages.⁶⁹

In response to Dr. 'Uthmān Amīn's (d. 1977)⁷⁰ explanation of Cartesian doubt that it does not entail doubt based on will but doubt based on reason, and that even the commentators of Descartes pointed to the fact that Descartes' religious beliefs remained intact due to his belief, namely, "the nature of religious beliefs are essentially inexplicable",⁷¹ Ṣabrī replies that it is a contradiction on the part of a believer who continues to believe in spite of his reason's doubt and denial. Consequently, if his reason asks him to believe but he denies it, it is called stubborn disbelief or *al-kufr al-'inādiyy*. Similarly, if his reason asks him to disbelieve and he still believes that deserves to be called stubborn belief or *al-īmān*

⁶⁷ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 218.

⁶⁸ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 251.

⁶⁹ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 215-216.

⁷⁰ He was professor of philosophy in King Fuad's University, the author of a book on Descartes *Dikart* and a personal friend of Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī.

⁷¹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 100.

*al-'inādiyy.*⁷² Obviously, Şabrî does not approve of this idea and again reiterates the fact that Descartes abolished the duality of faith and reason in the Modern Age.

b) David Hume

Şabrî credits Descartes to be the most distinct intellectual who almost singularly brought down scepticism and gave a chance for modern Western thought to begin and develop. With David Hume (1711-1776), according to Şabrî, European thought enters a new era in which ancient scepticism is revitalized and the general characteristic of uncertainty that played havoc with ancient Greek thought reinforced.⁷³ According to Şabrî, Hume's significance in the West is not only because he defeated Descartes but also because he strongly influenced Immanuel Kant, the most prominent philosopher on the European scene, who heavily drew from Hume and who even remarked that Hume woke him up from his "dogmatic slumber".⁷⁴ Thus, Şabrî fully comprehends Hume's importance, contribution and place in the Western intellectual history.⁷⁵

Broadly speaking, Şabrî has a number of objections against the Humean philosophical contribution. Şabrî associates Hume's scepticism to his general contribution as an empiricist which confined Hume to the material and sensual world and which resultantly cut him off from what is beyond the physical manifestations. The physical world by its very nature and according to *Kalām* theology is ever-changing and unstable and therefore not absolutely reliable. Added to this is the feebleness of human sensual perception which further compromises the reliance on the material world. To Şabrî, empiricism—in its essential form—does not seem to be more than a statistical counting of the material at stake which needs to be interpreted by reason. Empiricism without the support of reason has

⁷² See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 98-100; also 2nd edition of *Dikrî* (Cairo) pp. 67 and 105.

⁷³ Ibid., v. 1, p. 421. Cf. Thomas M. Olszewsky, "The Classical Roots of Hume's Scepticism," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 52, No. 2. (Apr. - Jun., 1991), pp. 269-287.

⁷⁴ See: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*, trans. and ed. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 10.

⁷⁵ For a comprehensive view of Hume's scepticism, see: T. Penelhum, "Hume's Scepticism and the *Dialogues*," in Stanley Tweyman, ed. *David Hume: Critical Assessments* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 126-150.

no value and cannot impart true knowledge. On the other hand, reason has not only the capacity to interpret the material data and arrive at certain conclusions, rather its rulings —by their very nature— are unchangeable and thus fully reliable and acceptable. So, minimizing the role of reason and increasing the importance of the role of the physical world and sensual perception weakens the certainty of our knowledge and inevitably leads to *al-ẓann* or even *al-shakk*. Importantly enough, empiricism can neither affirm nor deny the metaphysics which serves as the basis for any religion or religious belief at whose centre lies the belief in God. In matters of religious belief, the scientific concept of the suspension of judgment simply does not apply. So, Hume again abolishes the concept of certain knowledge *al-yaqīn* and relegates it to *ghālib al-ẓann* or *al-iḥtimāl* or *al-tarjīḥ* thus deliberately withdrawing convincing trust from human reason.⁷⁶ In fact, Ṣabrī goes on to deduce from this Humean example that empiricism as a matter of principle finally leads to scepticism.⁷⁷ Scepticism cripples the development of human thought and creates a crisis in matters of religion and morals which eventually culminate into their negation and denial.

In Ṣabrī's view, this is the basic platform which Hume creates and from which he launches further critical appraisals of other issues. His scepticism will lead him to criticize four chief problems, namely: the argument of design for the existence of God, the miracles, the existence of the human soul and the existence of the world outside the human mind.⁷⁸ All of them are of crucial importance for religion.

c) Immanuel Kant

Ṣabrī looks at Immanuel Kant as somebody who has broken the line with the Western scholastic heritage of the Middle Ages and adopted the modern

⁷⁶ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 125.

⁷⁷ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 242.

⁷⁸ For relevant chapters, see: "Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State" and "Of Miracles," in *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), then his essay titled "Of the Immortality of the Soul" originally printed in *Natural History of Religion* (1755), then the first volume of *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739).

tradition of Descartes eventually falling under the sceptical influence of Hume. In the field of science, it is perhaps interesting to note that Kant was one of the earliest thinkers who acknowledged and appreciated Newton's physics. Kant's rationality and intellectual contribution is therefore necessarily confined within the context of modern philosophical and scientific influences.

That Kant broke with the Western scholastic tradition became obvious to Şabrî when he criticized and dismissed the major rational arguments for the existence of God while, ironically, accepting the weakest of the arguments mainly based on the sensual experience such as the argument from design.⁷⁹ The rational arguments for the existence of God were based on arguing that the cause and effect relation could not go infinitely into the past. It must stop at a certain point which is the ultimate cause of other causes and which is not caused by any other cause. That cause is God. This argument is similar to the Aristotelian argument of the unmoved mover except that the unmoved mover is substituted by the uncaused cause. Kant attacks the basis of this argument, namely that the causes must stop at a certain point. If that was proved incorrect, the argument for the existence of God simply collapses. In Kant's view there is nothing to prove that the causes are not infinite.⁸⁰ A similar claim was launched by Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh, but — according to Şabrî— he continued to rely on the same argument believing that it would still be acceptable.⁸¹ In Şabrî's view this was absurdity. Kant was also mistaken about this argument like the Shaykh but from another point of view. Şabrî's contention is that the impossibility of the infinite chain of causes is based on the principle of contradiction. To put it more clearly, to deny the impossibility of the infinite chain of causes is to deny the principle of contradiction itself. But Şabrî does not understand how Kant denies the impossibility of the infinite chain of causes and does not deny the principle of contradiction as well because these two principles are intrinsically related so denying one of them inevitably leads to the

⁷⁹ For detailed discussion on this issue, see the chapter on the "Existence of God" in this dissertation, pp. 244-246.

⁸⁰ For Şabrî's exposition of this problem, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 178-202.

⁸¹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 181.

automatic denial of the other. Similarly, to claim that this existing world came into existence is *tarjīḥ biḡhayr murajjih* is in fact a contradiction itself.⁸² Subsequently, questioning the correctness of the impossibility of the infinite chain of causes, claiming that things happen without causes thus endangering the principal of contradiction are obvious manifestations of scepticism that intruded Kantian philosophy, and thus represent clear instances of the revival of ancient Greek sophism in modern philosophy.⁸³

There is yet another aspect of Kantian philosophy which Şabrî considers as sceptical.⁸⁴ Discussing the issue of human perception of the outside world Kant asserts that there is no possibility that the mind which is immaterial can perceive the physical world through the senses, something that is so similar to Sextus Empiricus contention that the interior mind cannot reach the exterior.⁸⁵ What we experience in fact is not what is really there. These are mere projections of the mind and not the real account of what really exists outside our mind.⁸⁶ This in fact boils down to Kant's denial of the physical world. Şabrî mainly sees this Kantian revolution as a philosophical system which in its very essence denies the obvious that does not need to be proved, or the so called axiomatic knowledge; in this case the knowledge that the outside world truly exists and that it is as we perceive it to be, not something else. To Şabrî, this resembles Protagoras' view that man sees things according to what appears to him,⁸⁷ which is again a return to the sceptical heritage of Greece.

In Şabrî's view no one contributed more than Kant to the decline of the position of reason and the weakening of the concept of certainty in the modern age. Instead, he totally substituted the certain with probable knowledge and tried to bring it up to the level of necessary knowledge.⁸⁸ Subsequently, Şabrî categorizes

⁸² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 127.

⁸³ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 304.

⁸⁴ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 223.

⁸⁵ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 244.

⁸⁶ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 24.

⁸⁷ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 252.

⁸⁸ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 108.

Kant among the *al-sufistā'īyyah al-'indiyyah* or egocentric sophists.⁸⁹ Furthermore, on the basis of this, Ṣabrī declares Kant as the leader of the sceptics.⁹⁰

d) G. W. F. Hegel

With Kant, scepticism "wore new clothes and as such prospered in the philosophy of Hegel who denied certainty in all things, even the impossibility of contradiction, even that two plus two make four and that the new results of science confirm it..."⁹¹ So, if the main point of scepticism is the denial of the principle of contradiction then the pinnacle of scepticism in the mainstream modern Western philosophy according to Ṣabrī is Hegel.⁹² It is interesting to note that all what Ṣabrī says about Hegel in fact points to his theory of dialectics which Ṣabrī never mentions explicitly in his writings. Using rather the terminology of Islamic jurists, Ṣabrī says that Hegel literally "sanctioned contradiction"⁹³ and "denied the impossibility of combining two contradictories"⁹⁴ probably pointing to his thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Also he "sanctioned doubt in one plus one being two".⁹⁵ To Ṣabrī it also seems that Hegel does not care about the principle of *luẓūm al-muḥāl* or inevitability of the impossible, an assertion which, in its essence, is a principle of contradiction as well.⁹⁶ Ṣabrī particularly got annoyed with these views when they were translated into Arabic by two Muslim scholars who left it without comment or criticism and who even endorsed that aforementioned principles should be discarded because of the "Hegelian truth".⁹⁷ Ṣabrī is afraid that "if the law of contradiction is abolished there will be no impossibility left in the world"⁹⁸ and

⁸⁹ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 136.

⁹⁰ Ibid., v. 2, p. 175, 252.

⁹¹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 305.

⁹² For analysis of Hegel's view on scepticism, see: Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Scepticism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁹³ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 45.

⁹⁴ Ibid., v. 2, p. 125; Cf. p. 163.

⁹⁵ Ibid., v. 2, p. 123.

⁹⁶ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 127.

⁹⁷ Ibid., v. 2, p. 125.

⁹⁸ Ibid., v. 2, p. 127.

that "there will be no necessary knowledge which does not rule out the opposite".⁹⁹ As to why Hegel projects this kind of view, Şabrî's guess is that it is because of his Christian religion which is abundant in contradictions.¹⁰⁰ Due to the Hegelian denial of contradiction, his reliance on sceptical Sophism and its creeping in the mainstream thought, Şabrî proclaims the failure of modern Western philosophy.¹⁰¹

* * *

What prompted Şabrî to follow this sceptical attitude and criticize it widely? The intrusion of modernity in the Muslim intellectual ambiance created a kind of chaos in which old principles and values were collapsing while the new were being established. It seems that the Muslim mind was losing its frame of reference. This kind of atmosphere was conducive for the emergence of sceptical manifestations. They ultimately threatened established Muslim scholarship and traditional theology which was chiefly centred on pure rational arguments. In this regard, Şabrî identifies the West as the key source for spreading doubts in the Muslim East in his time:

[...] the stream of doubts that the Christian and atheistic West exports to our Islamic East —the way it exports all other products— and the first and foremost of this kind of exports is the élite who is educated according to the modern system.¹⁰²

In Şabrî's view, the intrusion of Western religious and nonreligious ideas underwent three phases which he succinctly describes in the following way:

In the first phase, a complaint was floated against the stagnancy of Muslims and the '*ulamā*' of Islam in respect of their religion. Some '*ulamā*' even supported this complaint. Because those who complained and supported [this view] did not enjoy sound knowledge and healthy reason, the whole issue got confused for them. So, in the process of criticising the stagnancy regarding [understanding of] religion, religion itself came under attack. As the complaints continued [...] the imitation of West replaced the stagnancy in Islam. A time came when —directly or indirectly— a view that *al-ilm* did not recognize anything that was not verifiable by sensual experiment

⁹⁹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 126, this is one of traditional definitions of *al-ilm* among *Mutakallimūn*.

¹⁰⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 21; Cf. p. 128.

¹⁰¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 128.

¹⁰² Ibid., v. 1, p. 3.

became dominant, and —sometimes— even reason was bonded together with science to ignore anything except the physical. As it was not investigated in which science it was like that and according to which reason it was like that. So, both of them i.e. science and reason were accepted as absolute enemies of religion due to religion's non-reliance on material proof. Consequently, atheism became the official ideology of science and reason [...]. This continued until despair captured the hearts of those to whom religion was dear, and none had the courage to defend religion scientifically [...] and only a few remembered that —in the past— reason was known for its arguments for the existence of God [...]. The tiny hope was finally extinguished by one breath which returned disappointment to their hearts saying: it is just a dream of absolute reason and logic in positive modern times in which they have no value.¹⁰³

This is in addition to what has already been mentioned in the chapter on materialism, and what Ṣabrī reiterates again and again. What is obviously clear here is that he considers materialism and scepticism as the two chief reasons with which the dissemination of atheism —both in the Muslim East and the Christian West— is closely connected:

the second of the two channels is the Sophist scepticism which denies the acquisition of certainty via sensualities and rationalities. Both systems agree on the mistrust of reason and logic on which Islam establishes its beliefs. So, Islam denies both of these systems, and the systems themselves contradict each other. Logically it follows that one who belongs to either of them rejects the other. Similarly, who ever belongs to Islam must reject both of them.¹⁰⁴

Naturally, since there is nothing worse than atheism in Ṣabrī's view, as someone who represents the *Kalāmī* tradition in the modern world, he regards materialism and scepticism which lead to it, not only as the main causes for the dissemination of atheism but also as the clearest manifestation and the most distinctive trait of modernity. Ṣabrī looks at modern scepticism through the prism of its historical development and —in one way or the other— long time association with materialism, both as represented in the Greek heritage and as explained,

¹⁰³ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 102-103. Cf. George Basalla, "The Spread of Western Science: A Three-Stage Model Describes the Introduction of Modern Science into Any Non-European Nation," in *Science*, 156 (1967), pp. 611-622.

¹⁰⁴ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 269.

presented and criticized in Muslim scholarship rather than a truncated modern offshoot of contemporary civilization. In this effort, he is conscious of the history of the development of ideas and continuity of philosophical trends in two diverse world civilizations. This approach makes him unique among the modern Muslim intellectuals among whom some even tended to look at modernity as a phenomenon that was not rooted in the rich cultural and philosophical heritage of ancient civilizations, or who experienced the invasion of modernity as a continuation of the onslaught of crusades from the Middle Ages and whose reasons and senses became clouded with a superficial analysis of the East and West relations.

Chapter V

Darwinism

Darwinism, along with its modified version, arrived in the Muslim world gradually and through different ways.¹ Interestingly, “the men who first ushered Darwinism into the Islamic world were Christian secular thinkers”² such as Ya‘qūb Ṣarrūf (1852-1927), Fāris Nimr (1856-1951), Jurjī Zaydān (1861-1914), Shiblī Shumayyil³ (1850-1917) and Salāmah Mūsā (1887-1958).⁴ Each one of them contributed to the dissemination of Darwinism through publishing of articles in journals: Ṣarruf and Nimr through *Al-Muqtataf*;⁵ Zaydan through his *Al-Hilāl*; Shumayyil and Mūsā through articles and books.⁶ Common Muslim response to Darwinism was negative but some reformers such as Rashīd Riḍā argued that Darwin’s theory of evolution did not contradict the Islamic teachings.⁷ Others, like Ismā‘il Aḥmad and Ismā‘il Maẓhar openly contributed a great deal in advocating and propagating the theory.⁸

¹ See: Muzaffar Iqbal, *Science and Islam* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), pp. 195-198.

² Najm Berzrjan, “The Islamic World,” in Thomas Glick, ed. *The Comparative Reception of Darwinism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 375.

³ See: Albert Hourani, “Christian Secularists: Shumayyil and Antun,” in *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 245-260 and Susan Zaidah, *A Radical in His Time: The Thought of Shibli Shumayyil and Arab Intellectual Discourse 1882-1917* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Michigan, 1991) which specifically deals with Shumayyil and Darwinism in the Muslim world.

⁴ For more on the introduction of Darwinism in the Muslim world, see: Marwa Elshakry, *Darwin’s Legacy in the Arab East: Science, Religion and Politics 1870-1914* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History: Princeton University, June 2003), Abdullah al-Omari, *The Reception of Darwinism in the Arab World* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 1982).

⁵ Nadia M. Farag, *Al-Muqtataf, 1876-1900: A Study of the Influence of Victorian Thought on Modern Arabic Thought* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Oxford University, 1969).

⁶ For an analysis of the general impact that Darwinism created in the Arab world, see: Adel A. Ziadat, *Western Science in the Arab World: The Impact of Darwinism 1860-1930* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986).

⁷ “Madhab Darwīn lā yunāqid al-Islām,” in *Al-Manār*, 12 (1909), pp. 634-637. For a good analysis of this article, see: Susan Zaidah, pp. 192-200. For other responses, see: Ibrāhīm al-Ḥūrānī, *Al-Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn fī ‘l-Radd ‘alā Buṭl Darwīn* (Beirut, 1886).

⁸ He was the first to translate the *Origin of Species* into Arabic. He published the first six chapters in 1918, added four more in 1928 and finally completed the whole book in 1964. The Arabic title was: *Asl al-Anwa’ wa Nushūiha bi ‘l-Intikhab al-Ṭabī’i wa Ḥifz al-Ṣufuf al-Ghālib fī ‘l-Tanāḥur ‘alā al-Baqā’* (Cairo, 1918).

Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī uses a number of terms for what can broadly be called as the idea of evolution in the Western thought. The most common term to denote this idea in his vocabulary is *Madhhab al-Taṭawwur*⁹ or the school of evolution. Other terms like *Madhhab al-Nushū' wa 'l-Irtiqā'*¹⁰ or the school of growth and evolution; *Madhhab al-Takammul wa 'l-Taṭawwur*¹¹ or shortly *Madhhab al-Takammul* only, the school of perfection and evolution; *Madhhab Darwīn*¹² or the school of Darwin, *al-Madhhab al-Darwīnī*¹³ or Darwinian school and *al-Darwīniyyūn*¹⁴ or Darwinists, clearly refer to the theory of Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and those who followed him.¹⁵ Ṣabrī differentiated between several types of theories of evolution in the modern Western tradition. One was, of course, August Comte's theory of three stages, which has already been discussed.¹⁶ The other one was Darwin's predecessor's, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's (1744-1829) theory of evolution, which the former merely "took over and corrected"¹⁷ and "snatched the leadership from him".¹⁸ Ṣabrī then does not put the sign of equation between evolution—as a general concept in the West—and the scientific contribution that Charles Darwin rendered to it, though—in the modern times—Darwin's contribution seems almost exclusive for it. For him, evolution was a broader concept which was not confined to Darwin's theory alone. Darwinism was merely a recent modern scientific interpretation of the idea of evolution.¹⁹ Due to the stunning development of science, it seems as if everything was set to accept a more scientific

⁹ Ṣabrī rarely applies term *Al-Taṭawwur al-Ṭabī'ī* or natural evolution. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 284, 300, 310.

¹⁰ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 279, 299, 457.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 448, 458.

¹² *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 281, 285.

¹³ *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 280, 285, 302.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 302.

¹⁵ Darwin presented his ideas in his celebrated *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London, 1859) followed by *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London, 1871).

¹⁶ See: the chapter on "Positivism" in this dissertation, pp. 81-87.

¹⁷ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 281, 457, 459.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 196 and v. 2, p. 457. Ralph F. Shaner argues on similar lines in his "Lamarck and the Evolution Theory," in *The Scientific Monthly*, Vol. 24, No. 3. (Mar., 1927), pp. 251-255. For more on Lamarck, see the classical: A. S. Packard, *Lamarck: The Founder of Evolution: His Life and Work with translations of His Writings on Organic Evolution* (New York: Arno Press, 1980 [1901]).

¹⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 279.

elaboration of the concept of evolution which found its final embodiment and perfect manifestation in Darwin's theory; the third type of Western theories of evolution that Ṣabrī talks about. Eventually, Darwin's theory became authoritative, influential and popular because of its acclaimed experimental and scientific evidence on which it was presumably established but which Ṣabrī non-reluctantly considered disputable. What seems to emerge from these discussions is a kind of theory of evolution that is acceptable to Ṣabrī on the basis of his religious teachings and convictions, modern scientific investigations and rational argumentation, the result of which is that his own idea about the origin and development of life embedded in traditional knowledge became more crystallized.

Ṣabrī is never apologetic about his disagreement with Darwinism. He does not want to harmonize the Qur'ān and Darwin's theory like some modern Muslim thinkers did. The basic principles of his scholarship remain unchanged: he does not want to compromise the eternal Divine position for the sake of an ephemeral scientific theory which is not even wholeheartedly accepted in the West. He is meticulously critical of Darwinism in every possible sense and he makes sure that it is rejected on the grounds of its internal loopholes and inconsistencies as well as its incompatibility with general rational principles which are, according to him, not only Islamically and religiously inspired, but which are essentially a matter of common sense.

In Ṣabrī's analysis, Darwin's concept of evolution is fundamentally associated with the origin of human life and its physical and mental development. That however, does not exclude its significant implications on the origin and growth of religion. He is not affected by the widespread hearsay in the Muslim world and elsewhere that the theory of evolution is only about proving that the origin of human being is from his animal ancestor; monkey.²⁰ In that way he actually rectifies the wrong notions and gross distortions about the theory in the Muslim world and establishes himself as an independent authority and mediator

²⁰ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 281.

that is capable of presenting not only the truths about traditional Islamic and modern Western scholarships but also that he successfully becomes their sober, reasonable and intellectual criticizer.

Şabrî took special interest in Darwin's theory of evolution due to its importance in Western thought and its subsequent influence on the educated élites in the Muslim world. The educated élite exercised immense influence on the intellectual, religious and social aspects in emerging modern Muslim communities. Strictly speaking, as has already been pointed, Şabrî does not use the term *evolution* only to denote the set of ideas that were originally Darwin's own or that have, in one way or the other, inspired subsequent thinkers to deliberate on their lines, but Şabrî also talks about "*madhhab darwîn wa şurrahîhi*"²¹ or the school of Darwin with its various interpretations and adoptions which Charles Darwin might have not predicted or foreseen either in the Western world as exemplified for instance in Herbert Spencer, Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), Ludwig Büchner and others, or in the Muslim World as represented by its Christian and Muslim supporters.

Şabrî does not consider the "school of Darwin" to be a proper philosophical school. Neither does he consider Darwin as a proper philosopher although his theory is based on some philosophical ideas that imply certain connotations. Rather Şabrî treats Darwin as someone who claimed to be a scientist—which the latter would certainly appreciate— but as a scientist who was not faithful to the rigorous canon of science. In his view, the trespassing of borders of science made him neither a true scientist nor a true philosopher. At one point disappointed with Darwin's arguments Şabrî alarmingly exclaims: "So where is the rational and logical reasoning in Darwinian school and where is experimentation and observation?"²² What seems to be the case is that Şabrî rigorously implemented scientific investigation on Darwin and his theory the way materialists harshly

²¹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 460.

²² Ibid., v. 2, p. 280.

implemented modern scientific methods in dealing with religion.²³ In that sense, Şabırî differs from many modern Muslim thinkers who responded to Darwinism focusing only on its philosophical implications and social consequences.

i. Evolution as a Scientific Theory

In a number of places, Şabırî summarized Darwin's theory of origin and evolution in his own words. In one of them, the theory runs in the following manner:

It is an absolute denial of the multiplicity of animal species in their origin. In his [Darwin's] view, animals were not different species in the beginning. They were one specie from which all other species evolved from one kind to another. The continuity of the [process of] Evolution was coupled with the progress of the renewal of the old and the extinction of what did not deserve survival from these previous and subsequent species. So, there were many extinct species that preceded the existing one. It is possible that there were extinct intermediate species between the human, which was the highest, and the newest specie and the monkey, which resembled it. A possibility is also there that both human and monkey are descendants of a common extinct origin. So, animals descended from the lowest and simplest species which progressed in degrees of ascendance. Therefore, the distance for the old species increases by the increase in their simplicity and lowness and gets closer to the new according to their progress in ascendance. This progress and begetting of species may be absolutely natural and not relying on the Will of God neither in its process nor in its beginning and this is the position of atheists from the interpreters of the school of Darwin like Büchner. Furthermore, it may rely on the Will of God on the basis of what they said that Darwin did not belong to those who negate the existence of God. To the second opinion leans Immanuel de Novier from the supporters of the school of Evolution in his book *Are We Descendents of Monkey* whose contention is that this school investigates the process of becoming of these existing things, not from whom this process began.²⁴

²³ For discussion on whether the theory of evolution is scientific or not, see: Raphael Falk, "Darwin's Theory of Evolution as a Science," in *Poetics Today*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Interpretation in Context in Science and Culture. (1988), pp. 61-94.

²⁴ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 279-283; Perhaps it would be interesting and useful to compare Şabırî's summary with the following one: (1) Species are comprised of individuals that vary ever so slightly from each other with respect to their many traits. (2) Species have a tendency to increase in size over generations at an exponential rate. (3) This tendency, given limited resources, disease, predation, and so on, creates a constant condition of struggle for survival among the members of a species. (4) Some individuals will have variations that give them a slight advantage in this struggle, variations that allow more efficient or better access to resources, greater resistance to disease, greater

After the summary what usually follows in the classic books is a formulation of objectionable questions that the opponent's position raises. In this case, Şabrî pursues the same pattern. His main contention against the theory, irrespective of its two aforementioned kinds, namely, the one which acknowledges the existence of God and the other which does not,²⁵ is that it is not based on scientifically verifiable facts and valid experiments.²⁶ In Şabrî's eyes, his opponent would like it to be scientifically verifiable, but it is not. In the following paragraph Şabrî fully elaborates what he exactly means:

The begetting of species is something that is not verifiable by senses and observation. Observation of intermediary fossils between two existing species dug out from the earth is neither the observation of the begetting itself nor is it the observation that they are intermediary in the process of begetting due to the possibility that the intermediary and both of its sides are independent species created separately.²⁷ A scientist has no right to leap from the physical sensual similarity to the non-sensual begetting no matter how many close intermediaries there may be between the two. Even if he does so, he is encroaching over the limits of experimentation which they [scientists] propagate to respect.²⁸

success at avoiding predation, and so on. (5) These individuals will tend to survive better and leave more offspring. (6) Offspring tend to inherit the variations of their parents. (7) Therefore favourable variations will tend to be passed on more frequently than others, a tendency Darwin labelled 'Natural Selection'. (8) Over time, especially in a slowly changing environment, this process will cause the character of species to change. (9) Given a long enough period of time, the descendant populations of an ancestor species will differ enough to be classified as different species, a process capable of indefinite iteration. There are, in addition, forces that encourage *divergence* among descendant populations, and the elimination of intermediate varieties. See: James Lennoc's article on "Darwinism" in Edward N. Zalta, ed. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2004 Edition). URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2004/entries/darwinism/>>. Retrieved in March 31st 2006.

²⁵ For these two types of Darwinism, see: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 459.

²⁶ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 283.

²⁷ Darwin stated clearly that this is the most powerful objection against his theory: "But just in proportion as this process of extermination has acted on an enormous scale, so must the number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed, be truly enormous. Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against the theory." But he also dismissed it in a rather surprising way saying that: "The explanation lies, as I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record." *Origin of Species* (1859), p. 280. This, of course, justifies criticism that scientists often mold data to fit their preferred conclusions.

²⁸ *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 283.

In this context of a doubtful and objectionable method that these scientists employ, Şabrî asks a challenging question:

I do not understand why they search for fossils which may resemble human more than living monkeys, and why do not they argue for [monkey's] transformation to humans without the need to discover an intermediary between them?²⁹

Şabrî's criticism of the best Darwinian fossil evidence *Pithecanthropus erectus* or "Java man" is also worth attention. His opinion is that the Java man was pompously accepted as the intermediary that connects monkeys and humans in spite of an exceedingly large distance (15m) between the skull and the thigh which does not guarantee that they belonged to one body. Furthermore, there is no necessary proof for transformation from one kind to another due to possibility that this is a fossil of another independent kind of animal that died out.³⁰

While pointing to the existence of contradictions within modern scientific and philosophical intellectualities Şabrî does not forget to remind the reader about general rules that Western thinkers have imposed on themselves:

And you know how the Western experimental school identifies the locus of proof reached by experimentation; they even say that if somebody hit a wall with his head then experimental proof in this case is the existence of pain produced by the hitting and not the existence of the wall and the head, and if their existence is proved, it is proved by reason not by experimentation.³¹

Finally concluding that:

If the role of experiment in the evidence in the case of a collision between a head and a wall is the presence of the pain which resulted from the collision, and not the existence of the two colliding objects (existence according to the school of Kant is the product of the existing perception). So, what is the role of experimentation in the case of fossils that they found

²⁹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 280.

³⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 279. Eugene Dubois, the discoverer of "Java man" did not tell the international congress of zoologists in 1895 that he had found in the same stratum two decidedly human skulls as well as parts of four other thighbones of apes. After 42 years of notoriety, he finally admitted in 1937 that "Java man" was just a large gibbon: "Pithecanthropus was not a man, but a gigantic genus allied to the Gibbons". See: Walt Brown. *In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood*, 6th rev. ed. (Phoenix: Center for Scientific Creation: 1995), p. 51.

³¹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 283.

beneath the earth which are similar in shape only compared with the presence of the existing species of animals above them?³²

And at another place, but in the light of scientific rules that they are bound to follow—if they would have applied them honestly—Şabrî explains what kind of proofs they would have to bring up:

It is, therefore, binding on them—in order to prove their experimental school logically and if they are sincere in their views—to come with a monkey who will tell us openly that he has been transformed into a human being, who talks like a man talks, who laughs like a man laughs and thinks like man thinks, or they should come up with a fossil which will do all these things. Only then will we give up to the request that the transformed one should walk erect like a man.³³

In his analysis Şabrî goes step by step from the very point of the origin of species. This type of begetting that relies on nature—and he explains here what he means by nature; the begetting that is self-reliant, not on any external agent—is plainly contradicting reason and its primary principles.³⁴ To say that by reason Şabrî means well-defined reason in the *Kalām*'s scholarly tradition given to his educational training and personal convictions is a logical conclusion especially in the context of modernity but surprisingly he turns the tables exclaiming that reason is the same irrespective of its intellectual or geographical belonging i.e. the East or the West.³⁵ In order to prove so, he gives long quotations from prominent Western authorities such as Elme-Marie Caro (1874-1887), member of French Academy, Charles Riche, Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), Kiliyum de Vonte, Chevreul (1786-1889) and Sir Oliver Lodge (1851-1940).³⁶

Şabrî goes further to say that the conception that this progress ascends towards perfection only, solely by itself because in the previous case that demanded merely an agent but in this second case i.e. the case of ascending towards perfection, that actually called for an intelligent agent. In this progress towards

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., v. 2, p. 280.

³⁴ Ibid., v. 2, p. 283.

³⁵ Ibid., v. 2, p. 285.

³⁶ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 285-302.

perfection there are three distinct types of movements: one is progress itself, the other is its ascending nature and the third is the progress towards a definite goal, the goal of perfection.³⁷ This cannot be a natural process i.e. a process that is not relying on anything but itself. And the more the Darwinists deny the final causes or teleology, the more they get away from the creationists position that is dependent on the existence of God, which is crucial for Şabrî.³⁸

Şabrî's remarks on the concept of natural selection, which is the core of the theory, are profound and interesting. As a first step, he carefully and correctly recaptures its main points and then, as a second step, proceeds to criticize it. He brilliantly comments —without much explanation though— that the origin of life itself has not undergone such type of natural selection which Darwin proposes in his theory, and that on the basis of no reason he excludes the origin of life from the idea of natural selection. Or, to put it more bluntly; natural selection could not be applied on the origin of life itself and Darwin did not venture to explain the origin of life according to it. Evidently, from the manner Şabrî portrays it; he must have believed that he discovered an important inconsistency in the application of the idea of natural selection in Darwin's theory, or that he discovered something that modernists could not see with their eyes.³⁹

The second, not less impressive argument of Şabrî is that it is not exclusive that a surviving specie will live —and not die— in the course of battling nature's external predicaments. To put it the other way round, there is nothing that guarantees that it will retain its distinctive strength as compared to other species in the face of nature's challenges. What is more reasonable to Şabrî is that it will survive as feeble, weakened and exhausted by the process of struggle.⁴⁰

As far as the evolution of human intellect is concerned, Şabrî contends that there is nothing in this theory that explains it even if we conditionally accept the

³⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 310.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 283-284.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 284.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

material evolution as true for the sake of argument.⁴¹ His major argument is that "perception cannot evolve from no-perception as life cannot evolve from an inanimate body", adding to it that "perception does not evolve as a result of material struggle."⁴² However, a question may be raised here as to how Ṣabrī can hold this view i.e. that "perception cannot evolve from no-perception as life cannot evolve from an inanimate body" while it is his religious teaching which he subscribes to that God created from nothing i.e. that existence came from non-existence. The basic difference between the two is that Darwin's theory does not recognize any external agent that dictates evolution, its progress and direction while Ṣabrī does. In other words, Ṣabrī argues that something that evolves from non-existent to existent must have a cause—which is God—while Darwin's position is that it is self-evolving; thus denying it any external cause, which is to Ṣabrī entirely unjustified and unscientific.

Ṣabrī maintains that human perception could not have originated and evolved as a result of a material struggle. Mind and body are two separate entities that do not have a necessary nexus and that can affect one another in such a profound way as to originate the ability of perception. By its nature it is an incorporeal thing and therefore it could not have originated and evolved into the present state of human being as a result of material struggle. The evolution that can happen in the case of perception of "modern human being" the increase of knowledge and its systematization as compared to the "old human being" has not resulted from natural evolution but rather, from "development of disciplines through fertilization of ideas". The role of natural external causes is therefore limited to the instigation of mental faculty rather than its origination and invention.⁴³ Finally, Ṣabrī triumphantly concludes that:

the origination of life and the perception in an inanimate body and then its progress through natural evolution towards perfection without an agent

⁴¹ The practice of *Mutakallimūn* is to accept the false argument of the opponent provisionally, just to analyze it and prove it wrong. See: Dr. Al-Shafī'i, *al-Madkhal*, pp. 179-181.

⁴² *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 284.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 284.

and designer directing it and drawing it towards its goal is something that cannot be called reasonable.⁴⁴

ii. Ṣabrī's Criticism of Ismā'il Maẓhar

Ṣabrī also deals with Darwin's supporters in the Muslim World. For instance, he discusses Ismā'il Maẓhar's "voluminous book" in defense of Darwin's theory commenting that it is "filled with empty words that cannot stand in the face of a few lines of criticism".⁴⁵ He literally devastated Maẓhar's two major theses. Ṣabrī's analysis can be useful here as a recapitulation of his main points on the issue of Darwin's theory of evolution.⁴⁶

Ismā'il Maẓhar's first argument is that the theory of Darwin can be genuinely proved and established by experiment and observation of fossils which point beyond doubt that one kind had transformed into another. Ṣabrī's instant reply is that this cannot be experimented and observed in the present time. Even more than that; Ṣabrī reaffirms that this kind of transformation cannot be considered by experimental means because of its immaterial nature.⁴⁷ Maẓhar's second argument states that transformation can be proved rationally through comparison of similarities between parts of the bodies of presumed varied species which proves the existence of extinct intermediary species so similar to the present human being. Ṣabrī responds that it is more appropriate to consider that an extinct specie as remains of a human than as remains of extinct specie that mediated in transformation from one kind to another. Ṣabrī, typical of *Kalāmī* usage, concludes that as long as there is a probability like this, it permanently rules out

⁴⁴ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 28ff.

⁴⁵ Ibid., v. 2 p. 301. That must have been *Malqā al-Sabīl fi Madhab al-Nushū' wa-l'Irtiqā'* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'ah al-'Aṣriyyah, 1925). His other important book is: *Aṣl al-Anwā'*, (Cairo: Dār al-'Uṣūr, 1928) and "Shiblī Shumayyil wa Fikrat al-Taṭawwur fi 'l-Sharq al-'Arabi," in *Al-Kitāb*, 3 (1947): pp. 126-135.

⁴⁶ For more on Maẓhar's views on modernity and Islamic tradition, see: Ibrahim Ibrahim, "Ismail Maẓhar and Husayn Fawzi: Two Muslim 'Radical' Westernizers," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 9 (1972): pp. 35-41.

⁴⁷ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 300.

this way of argumentation.⁴⁸ And what is worse, is that Darwinists believe that they are supported by science but that is not true because they merely rely on opinion and assumption, and opinion does not serve the truth as stated in the Qur'ān.⁴⁹

Although Şabri's elaboration of Darwin's theory of evolution has distinct characteristics of classic *Kalāmī* exposition—which is not always theological in the Christian sense of the word—it may be said that it represents, by and large, an example of scientific reasoning more than anything else. It is clear that he does not refer to the verses of the Holy Scripture or the Tradition, nor does he quote any of the old religious authorities to support his views. Rather, he develops a strategy and argumentation on the basis of prevailing scientific and philosophical climate of his time, be it in the East or in the West, without mentioning his initial religious position or calling it into question or compromising its principles. This approach, in fact, exhibits some similarities with the famous first review of *Origin of Species*, written by the Anglican Bishop of Oxford Samuel Wilberforce for the *Quarterly Review* in 1860, which had far more to do with pure science than with matters of faith.⁵⁰

iii. Philosophical Implications of Darwin's Theory

Since Darwin's theory became the most dominant and influential scientific theory of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it exercised a strong impact on the philosophical, intellectual and religious ideas so much so that—for a long period of time—it stood as an accepted postulation that needed no evidence for justification. The irony was that it was simply assumed correct and, that on the basis of that, wholly new philosophical structures were constructed. Apart from this, it seems that it is not sufficient to scientifically examine this theory only while

⁴⁸ It is an axiom which goes like this in Arabic: *kullama baqiy al-iḥtimāl saqaṭ al-istidlāl*. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2 p. 301.

⁴⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2 p. 302. "But most of them follow nothing but fancy: truly fancy can be of no avail against truth. Verily Allah is well aware of all that they do." See: *Yasīn*, 10.

⁵⁰ Theodore Roszak, "Evolution," in Mircea Eliade, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987), v. 5, p. 208.

ignoring its tremendous philosophical complications and ambiguities. The philosophical problems involved in the theory may broadly be categorized under following titles: probability and chance, the nature of selection, teleology and selection, nominalism and essentialism and slowness and gradualism.⁵¹

a) Probability and Chance (*al-Iḥtimāl wa 'l-Ṣudfa*)

Ṣabrī maintains that probability and chance⁵² are two salient features of modern Western scientific thinking in general and the theory of evolution in particular.⁵³ Darwin apparently relates them to a number of causes such as: the spreading of scepticism and what he calls the “decline in certitude” on one hand, as well as feeble reliance on pure reason and increased reliance on senses and matter on the other. This definitely leads to another important feature that Ṣabrī recognizes in modernity, namely, relativism.

For him, the principle of probability may be useful and may play a constructive role in the expansion of scientific knowledge, but if it becomes a major element in scientific thinking without regulatory conditions, it may turn into wishful thinking rather than healthy scientific inquiry. Probability, in Ṣabrī's view, should therefore, be checked by science which works under the general guidance of the supreme authority of reason. It is in this context that Ṣabrī discusses Darwinism as a theory that pretends to be scientific but that cannot be considered truly so, because unchecked apparent probability seems to be its overwhelmingly vital element. That is why he primarily sees Darwin's theory as an unconfirmed “hypothesis” and “imagination” that cannot be proved by rigorous scientific or philosophic methods.

⁵¹ For this classification of philosophical problems I have benefited from James Lennoc's article on “Darwinism,” in Edward N. Zalta, ed. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2004 Edition). URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2004/entries/darwinism/>>. Retrieved on March 31st 2006. Also, see: Ernst Mayr, “The Philosophical Foundations of Darwinism,” in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 145, No. 4. (Dec., 2001), pp. 488-495.

⁵² See: *Origin of Species*, pp. 80-81.

⁵³ For a good attempt to sort out some broad issues regarding disputes around the role of chance in the theory of evolution, see: John Beatty, “Chance and Natural Selection,” in *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 51, No. 2. (Jun., 1984), pp. 183-211.

Many Darwinists were of the view that by increasing the scope of probability and possibility, nature could actually form itself in the order that is visible now. One particular name that Ṣabrī discusses is Ismā'il Adham who suggested the "law of the biggest random number" or *Qānūn al-'Adad al-A'zam al-Ṣudfī*⁵⁴ in which he argues that if probability is increased enough like in the example of dice, a favourable result may be expected in a relatively short period of time.⁵⁵ An example similar to this is the example of a printing machine that could randomly print a book such as the *Origin of Species* or the Qur'ān over an infinite period of time. In this way, Ismā'il moved from the "biggest random number" to an "infinite number" to guarantee the success of his theory.⁵⁶ But that, according to Ṣabrī, is only aggravating an already confusing situation because the wider the scope of probability the better the chance for unfavourable results to take place as well, and, of course, the lesser the chance of producing the wanted results.⁵⁷

In his subtle contra argument, Ṣabrī also meticulously examines the examples of printing machine and watch. He poses three challenging questions and elaborates them at length: "who has initiated the printing machine and the letters in the first place? Who put the letters in motion? And who produced the order as subsequent to their motion?"⁵⁸

Even more objectionable and problematic is Darwin's principle —if it can be called so—⁵⁹ of chance, *al-sudfah* which Ṣabrī defines as: "taking place of one of the two or many possible probabilities without being caused by a cause"⁶⁰ which is squarely opposed to the accepted principle of causality that is so crucial in modern science. Therefore, there is no meaning in substituting the position of cause; that is

⁵⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 403. Ismā'il Adham explained this theory in his article titled "Limādhā Ana Mulhid?" in *Al-Imām* (August, 1937), p. 36ff. See: Aḥmad Ibrāhīm al-Hawārī, ed. *Al-A'māl al-Kāmilah li 'l-Duktūr Ismā'il Aḥmad Adham* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1986), v. 3, pp. 80-91.

⁵⁵ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 349.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 403-404.

⁵⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 410.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 421.

⁵⁹ Ṣabrī has reservations about calling it a principle. *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 408, 411.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 419.

putting the world in order, with chance; that is no cause.⁶¹ It is tantamount to saying that things have their causes and their causes are chance which is in itself no-cause.⁶² That is a clear contradiction in Ṣabrī's view. Chance as such plays an important role in Darwin's theory so much so that it cannot theoretically work without it. It seems as if Darwin used it as a scapegoat to explain every difficulty he faced. That is why, to Ṣabrī, chance is synonymous to "helplessness" and Darwin used it to describe what ever has been happening in nature.⁶³ Ṣabrī's comments are strikingly similar to what Darwin wrote in his *Origin of Species*:

I have hitherto sometimes spoken as if the variations—so common and multiform in organic beings under domestication, and in a lesser degree in those in a state of nature—had been due to chance. This, of course, is a wholly incorrect expression, but it serves to acknowledge plainly our ignorance of the cause of each particular variation.⁶⁴

Ṣabrī's concluding remarks are that we observe order, system and coherence in nature. They must have their cause, the cause that cannot be substituted by chance which is no-cause. And he continues to ask if the system that is observable in nature could have evolved out of chance, or how could chance form something that is obviously so neat and organized?⁶⁵

b) Natural Selection (*Al-Intikhāb al-Ṭabīʿī*)

This brings us to the issue of natural selection which many consider to be the core of Darwinian Theory. For Ṣabrī, this selection cannot be directed by chance because that would lead to negation of coherence and harmony that are so obvious in nature. The other possible answer is that nature is willingly directing the process of selection; to which, in Ṣabrī's view, a great majority of Darwinists, sceptics, positivists and materialists subscribe. So, they attribute *al-ʿilm* or knowledge, *al-quḍrah* or power, *al-irāḍah* or will and *al-hikmah* or wisdom —that

⁶¹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 426.

⁶² See: Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., v. 2, p. 381.

⁶⁴ *Origin of Species*, p. 131.

⁶⁵ See: *Mawqif al-ʿAql* v. 2, p. 387.

are manifested in the process of selection— to nature itself.⁶⁶ In Ṣabrī's view, it is nothing less than divinization of nature to which major Divine attributes are ascribed. So, "instead of saying like believers do; that this is the work of our Lord, they say: this is the work of nature. But in fact they should have added that this is the work of our *Lord* nature".⁶⁷ The problem with this view according to Ṣabrī is that nature does not exist in that Divine form; it exists only as a name given to material living and non-living surroundings.⁶⁸ As to why do the naturalists say so, Ṣabrī explains that it is difficult for them to render all these occurrences to dead matter; therefore, they invented the usage of nature for that purpose.⁶⁹ In their view, it comes to rendering the choice of selection to "matter and energy or one of its characteristics such as weight, general gravitational force, mechanical force, warmth, light, electricity, magnetism, chemical connection and attraction force" which do not possess the quality of knowledge and will.⁷⁰ They direct their own progress which boils down to saying that "there is a system without systemiser, and laws without law-setter, and order without order-maker and a progress towards perfection without direction-giver [...] and there is a process towards the goal that is overcoming the problems—as they call it— without intention or feeling on the part of the one struggling to overcome the problem".⁷¹

The same applies to yet another concept that Darwinists propagate: the concept of natural instinct that became part and parcel of modern discourse, so

⁶⁶ Except for wisdom, these are the well known attributes of God in Kalām. See: Al-Ghazālī, "Al-Quṭb al-Thānī," in Inṣāf Ramaḍan, ed. *Al-Iqtisād fī 'l-Itiqād* (Damascus and Beirut: Dār Qutaybah, 2003), pp. 71-98.

⁶⁷ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 310.

⁶⁸ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 345.

⁶⁹ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 345-346 and 394-395.

⁷⁰ Ibid., v. 2, p. 345. Compare it with position of the leading contemporary evolutionist Richard Dawkins (b. 1941), Charles Simony Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University: "All appearances to the contrary, the only watchmaker in nature is the blind forces of physics, albeit deployed in a very special way. A true watchmaker has foresight: he designs his cogs and springs, and plans their interconnections, with a future purpose in his mind's eye. Natural selection, the blind, unconscious automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind. It has no mind and no mind's eye. It does not plan for the future. It has no vision, no foresight, no sight at all. If it can be said to play the role of watchmaker in nature, it is the blind watchmaker. *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: Norton, 1986), p. 5.

⁷¹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 310.

much so that some Muslims have even adopted it as a terminology without being aware of its implications.⁷²

According to Ṣabrī, all these options are impossible due to intricate contradictions involved. They confirm the action but deny the actor and because they are aware of it they render these actions to nature. So, first of all they trespass the limits of natural sciences when they deny the existence of the law-setter. Secondly, they talk about natural laws as acts without an actor or a cause, which is absurd. And thirdly, they made an actor which is nature that is not appropriate, because it does not possess knowledge and wisdom and because it does not exist ontologically.⁷³ Moreover, if material things exist ontologically on their own then they should be considered as necessary beings equal to God and this is contradicting the principle of chance which does not presuppose it.⁷⁴ Also, it becomes a form of pantheism in which material things become like gods and decide about their own destinies according to their own wishes. In such case what follows is a chaos that cannot possibly produce the organized observable results of natural selection. To Ṣabrī, this kind of material chaos is more dangerous than the chaos that would be expected as a result of the possibility of existence of many gods about which the Qur'ān talks.⁷⁵

c) Teleology and Selection (*Al-'illah al-Ghā'iyah wa 'l-Intikhāb al-Ṭabī'ī*)

Essentially, it seems that Darwin believes that selection has always been *working solely for the good* of each being; it helps them develop and become stronger through constant improvements in their abilities that are necessary for the struggle in the day-to-day life.⁷⁶ This idea of selection has called for an important question

⁷² Ibid., v. 2, p. 385.

⁷³ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 310.

⁷⁴ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 385.

⁷⁵ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 389. "If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both! but glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they attribute to Him!" *Al-Hajj*, 21.

⁷⁶ For more on this issue, see: Richard England, "Natural Selection, Teleology, and the Logos: From Darwin to the Oxford Neo-Darwinists, 1859-1909," in *Osiris*, 2nd Series, Vol. 16, Science in Theistic Contexts: Cognitive Dimensions. (2001), pp. 270-287.

i.e. whether it negated the final causes in nature or it further fortified them. In fact, Şabrî quotes many Western scholars who are of the view that selection is guided by the final causes⁷⁷ and that, in his view, makes more sense than the view that it is a purposeless process. In brief, he believes that these causes are so obvious in nature that it is not adequate, or even scientific, to deny them altogether. In such a case, the scientific theory fails because it is not describing reality even though it is its chief task. Şabrî succinctly summarizes the position of those who deny the final causes:

these [natural] laws seem to work as if directed towards certain goals. Perhaps [sometimes] they function in a mechanical way and oppose all meaningful and rational laws. Therefore, natural instinct is blind and subordinate to the states of chance and external circumstances which result in what may rather be considered as purposelessness if compared to an intelligent will.⁷⁸

Perhaps, the major argument of those who deny the existence of final causes is that not every law in nature can be said to have definite and explainable causes. The order in nature is a pure coincidence and what appears to be an order in it is without a goal. The example which they give to prove their point is the presence of nipples on the chest of the male human being; what are they for? Şabrî explains that for the majority of natural phenomenon, causes may be grasped and this can be used as an argument to prove their existence. But if we cannot recognize any final causes in them, it only tells about our limited understanding; not about non-existence of the goals. Even if someone insists on denying the existence of final causes, there is no value of such denial in the view of overwhelming evidence in their support. Or, to speak theologically, these inconsistencies tell that God is not confined by the laws which He set in nature.⁷⁹

The other argument against the existence of final causes is that they should precede the accident, not follow it. Şabrî explains that this view tells about its

⁷⁷ Such as Jacob Moleschott, Chemist Chevreul, Caro and Emanuel de Novier. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 458-459.

⁷⁸ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 388.

⁷⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 391-392.

holder's ignorance for the types of causes, or, at least, he pretends ignorance because if he accepts the existence of final causes he will be forced to accept the existence of order which points to the existence of God, whose existence, however, atheists want to disapprove.⁸⁰ In continuation of this, Şabrî generally remarks that even when Darwinists, materialists and positivists accept the existence of system, systematization and even systemiser in nature, they accept them by empty words devoid of meaning.⁸¹

Şabrî brings strong evidence in support of the existence of the final causes against those who deny them. One of them is the aforementioned natural instinct. He does not deny that instinct is inherited from one generation to another and if analyzed, he says, we can only go deep in the past without finding any solution because the question of how instinct occurred in the first place will remain unanswered. Natural instinct is so sophisticated that it cannot be accepted that it is the product of chance and the ability of species to adapt to the environment over a long period of time.

Another interesting evidence for the existence of final causes is their very presence in the actions of man who is a part of the cosmic system. So there is a clear contradiction in the sense that although materialists deny the cause to the cosmos in general they should also deny them in human beings because they are part of that overall system which is, according to them, run purposelessly.⁸²

d) Nominalism and Essentialism

Darwin's theory purports that one specie can develop into another specie that is totally different in kind. This, of course, calls in question, the true reality of species i.e. do they posses unchangeable positive essence or their reality can keep on evolving from one type to another and retain the sameness of the origin of life.⁸³

⁸⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 392.

⁸¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 394.

⁸² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 392.

⁸³ For a good overview of this issue, see: Rejane Bernier, "The Species as an Individual: Facing Essentialism," in *Systematic Zoology*, Vol. 33, No. 4. (Dec., 1984), pp. 460-469.

Ṣabrī seems not to have discussed the issue of the variations within a kind because that seemed to him non-objectionable. But about the difference between diverse species of animals and the difference between the animals and humans he categorically states that: "the distinction between human and other animals is the distinction issuing from the difference in essence not the difference in degree".⁸⁴ Significant is his insistence on the fact that a human being is distinct in his nature and different from other species due to reason that he possesses.⁸⁵

e) Slowness and Gradualism of Evolutionary Change

The concept that is directly related to chance is the slowness and gradualism in the process of evolution from "matter to plants, then from plants to animals and finally to the human being". The slowness and gradualism are supposed to allow chance to work out successfully those changes in nature and produce positive results in the course of billions of years that have elapsed in the past.⁸⁶ So nature overcomes all difficulties by itself with the help of long term periods.⁸⁷

There is an interesting example which evolutionists present as proof for the correctness of their theory: the formation of a hole in stone that is produced by long time water dropping. Ṣabrī rejects it on two accounts. The first is that it is so simple and that it does not resemble the complexity involved in human being. The second is that the hole is not made by itself; it is produced by the water dropping, that is to say that it has got a cause for its existence and formation.⁸⁸ Ṣabrī also gives the example of the poems written by Homers, Shakespeare, Hugo or Al-Mutanabbī and collected in book form, that no matter how much time you give to the letters they will never create the poetry that these poets composed.⁸⁹ Furthermore, as a general principle, Ṣabrī explicitly states that billions of years are simply not enough to convert an impossible into possible. An impossible remains

⁸⁴ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 280 and p. 89.

⁸⁵ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 314.

⁸⁶ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 348.

⁸⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 309.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 312.

⁸⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 347-348.

infinitely impossible and so does the possible.⁹⁰ On the other side, gradual progress and infinite time which the evolutionists contend for their theory also imply the existence of two powers that keep this evolution in progress. One is preserving the achieved stage of evolutionary progress and the other is selecting other suitable mutations. Otherwise, there would be nothing to guarantee the slow gradual movement of the process of evolution. This, again, attaches certain divine attributes to nature which has already been discussed.⁹¹

The Darwinists, such as Büchner, claim that nature rejects everything that is instantly made and accepts what is evolving and progressing.⁹² Therefore, instant creation in Darwinian paradigm is a total stranger. But Şabrî assures us that instant Divine creation, where ever is needed, does not result in so many logical inconsistencies, contradictions and impossibilities like evolution does.⁹³

Having discussed all these philosophical implications it becomes clear that the theory of Darwin has called for an absolute redefinition of intellectuality, morals, religion, in short, the whole meaning and purpose of life so far known to the world.⁹⁴ As it can be clear from the previous pages, Şabrî has constructively and intellectually contributed to the controversies raised by the theory using all intellectual material available to him. What is especially significant in his contribution is that he did not limit himself to Islamic philosophy only but incorporated in his arguments a number of leading Western philosophers belonging to different schools of thought as well as prominent Western scientists.

The number of arguments employed in his painstaking review of Darwinian theory tells us about his deep understanding of the need for developing a profound scientific and intellectual response to it. Evaluating them in the historical and geographical context, they become enormously significant because Şabrî is critically commenting on the modern intellectual outlook that was taking

⁹⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 312.

⁹¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 348.

⁹² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 382.

⁹³ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 384.

⁹⁴ Ibid., v. 2, pp. 378-379.

shape in the Muslim world from a very openminded perspective. From a methodological point of view and contentwise, his arguments continue to be valid in any serious undertaking of the theory especially for Muslim intellectuals. They will recognize in him a true representative of traditional Muslim intellectuality and a contemporary philosopher who had taste for modern philosophical issues.

PART II

Religion and Modernity: Crisis of Methodology

Chapter I

Changing Paradigms

Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī lived in turbulent times.¹ At a global level, a new world order emerged that increasingly marginalized the role of the Ottoman Empire exposing its weakness on one hand and revealing the dominance and strength of the European nations on the other.² In response to this hitherto unusual state of affairs, Ṣabrī yearned for the past glory. He felt obliged to highlight the positive role that the Ottoman Empire played in the history of Islamic civilization and to correct modern Arab writers such as Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ‘Anān (1896-1986)³ and ‘Abd Allāh al-Qāsīmī,⁴ let alone the Kemalists in modern Turkey and countless Western orientalist who disputed Muslim Empire’s positive role. He felt that it was his duty to defend the Muslim Empire because it did not represent simply an empire; it represented the religion of Islam and Muslim learning in the first place, and then everything else that was based on that. He, therefore, perceived the decline of the Ottoman Empire as a decline of Islamic dominance and scholarship.

In these changing global circumstances, what worried the Ottomans the most was the Western military machinery, organization and strategy that was

¹ Ṣabrī briefly discusses his life in the opening pages of his *magnum opus* as if talking to his father who expressed some reservations about his swift development into a scholar. Ṣabrī tends to justify it by destiny’s wisdom and the quickness and seriousness of events in the second half of his life. See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 1, pp. 1-3, 22.

² On the beginning of these relations, see: Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³ See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 1, pp. 71-72. *Ḥarb Munazzammah Yushiruhā al-Kamālīyyūn ‘alā al-Islām* (The organized war launched by Kemalists against Islam) in *Al-Risālah* and his book *Miṣr al-Islāmiyyah*. Many replied to him in daily newspapers and books but Ṣabrī pointed only to the eminent authors such as Muḥammad Farīd Wajdi, Khalīfah Muṣṭafā Kāmil Pāsha and even Farah Anṭūn in his *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatuh* (Alexandria, Dār al-Farābī, 1988 [orig. 1903]), p. 174; Ḥasan Ḥabashī, “Al-Salājiqah ‘Unṣur al-Quwwah fi ‘l-Islām,” in *Al-Risālah*, Issue 663; Lean Paul. *Mohamed Dynasties*, p. 150; Aḥmad b. Zaynī Dahlān, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Islāmiyyah*, v. 2, p. 15; Ed. [ouard] Engelhard, *La Turquie et la Tanzimat*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1882). trans. Ali Reṣad, *Türkiye ve Tanzimat: Devlet-i Osmaniyyenin tarih-i istilabatı Tanzimat devri, 1839-1876* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1910); ‘Abdurrahmān ‘Azzām Bey, ‘Ākhir al-Khulafā’, *Al-Ahrām*, 22.10.1944. Shakīb Arsalān, *Ḥādīr al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*, v. 3, p. 326; Richard Log, *Tārīkh Urubbah al-Ḥadīth*, Arabic trans. Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ‘Anān, v. 1, p. 47; Dr. ‘Alī al-Zaynī Bey, *Uṣūl al-Qānūn al-Tijārī*.

⁴ See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 1, pp. 91 ff.

coupled by targeted, well-thought and well-defined political decisions.⁵ Eventually, this formidable supremacy enabled the Europeans to safeguard their home; the old continent, to drive the Ottomans out and to threaten the existence of the Muslim Empire.⁶ The enormous development in the military machinery did not come about out of nowhere. It was a product of sustained development of scientific method that resulted in advancement of means of production and industrial revolution. This led the modern Muslim reformers to understand that the real strength of the West did not lie in big ships and guns but in scientific method that facilitated new inventions.⁷ A phenomenal conclusion, but —by and large— modern Muslim reformers tended to accept the ready-made solutions from the West as if they were compatible for application in the East. It is here, indeed, that Ṣabrī differed from modernists: he endeavoured to understand the core elements of Western success, tried to approach its philosophy critically and examine its implications on religion, tradition, society, politics, history, culture and intellectuality of Islam.⁸

After the military defeats, “the next phase of the encounter was dissemination of atheism based on sciences, and dissemination of materialistic principles among the educated élites [on one hand], and principles of nationalism among the elements that were under its flag [on the other].”⁹ It was the beginning of the intellectual encounter manifested primarily in the field of schooling and education. From the eighteenth century onwards, Muslim youth was educated in

⁵ For a brief discussion regarding Ottoman warfare, see: Suraiya Faruqi, “The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Ottoman Warfare,” in *The Ottoman Empire and the World around it* (London: I. B. Tauris & Company Ltd., 2004), pp. 98-119. And on involvement of great Western powers in bringing down the Ottoman Empire, see: Marian Kent, ed. *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Frank Cass, 2005 [1984]).

⁶ For a good presentation of events that led to the breakdown of the Empire, see: Martin Sicker, *Islamic World in Decline: From the Treaty of Karlowitz to the Disintegration of the Ottoman Empire* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger, 2001).

⁷ Niyazi Berkes offers a brief description of this critical period. See: “Silhouette of a Renaissance,” in *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), pp. 23-51.

⁸ For the story of his main work in which glimpses of this conclusion can be traced especially p. 73 where he says that at one point he found himself “defending Islam”; not the Ottoman Empire which was his first objective. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 71 ff, p. 83.

⁹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 22.

European universities, which, of course, did not employ Islamic concepts and values. They were also educated in modern institutions established on purely Western models in the Muslim world. Stressing on modern science, these institutions apparently did not take Islamic intellectual tradition seriously, except in some minor aspects.¹⁰ This resulted in the emergence of new Muslim élites who held modern Western ideas, who disassociated themselves from their own historical religious and intellectual heritage, and who became alienated from their contemporary society.

Socially, as a consequence of multiple military, political, economic and intellectual dynamics, not to mention the spread of injustice, corruption and immorality in the Muslim lands¹¹ and other complex factors, new trends surfaced in the Muslim society.¹² The rising élites became distanced from the common people, and by the passage of time, they ceased to represent their hopes and aspirations. For instance, Şabrî was concerned about their meagre representation in the mosques as compared with the increased representation of Jewish and Christian leaders in their places of worship. To Şabrî's utter despair, the only people who seemed to visit mosques on regular basis were the poor and the destitute.¹³ The Muslim élites became less religious and less loyal to their countrymen.¹⁴ Once they got power in their hands, they mercilessly imposed their modern views on the traditional Muslim society.¹⁵ Their way of clothing changed and their views on the status of women also changed. Many Muslim women "took off *hijāb*".¹⁶ Their

¹⁰ See: Ibid., v. 1, pp. 145, 455 ff.

¹¹ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 11.

¹² For a good study on the bifurcation of the Ottoman society, see: Fatma M. Gocek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹³ This observation Şabrî presented as a member of a committee that was appointed by the Egyptian Ministry of *Awqāf* to look into possibilities of reviving the importance of mosques in the society. For a part of that report, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 128-132.

¹⁴ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 60.

¹⁵ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 16. For the kind of role reformists should play in the society, and what actually Kemalists did in Turkey, see: Ibid., v. 1, p. 72, footnote no. 1.

¹⁶ Ibid., v. 1, p. 98. For more on Şabrî's views regarding the status of women in Muslim societies according to the *Shari'ah* and contemporary conditions, see: *Qawlī fi 'l-Mar'ah wa Muqāranatuh bi Aqwāl Muqallidat al-Gharb*, under series of books published about "Mushkilātunā al-Ijtimā'iyyah fi

lifestyles resembled modern European fashion more than the traditional Islamic one. Those who were close to the West became privileged and those who opposed it became less so. Again, the roots of social changes that were taking place in the Muslim world led Şabrî to consider their intellectual, cultural and historical foundations in the West. Moreover, Şabrî concluded that these social changes took place as a result of weaker commitment to religion which was a consequence of scepticism that had crept in the minds and hearts of individuals who were impressed by Western intellectuality, culture and power.¹⁷

Religiously, in order to avoid the impasse that resulted from the imposition of the West on the East, desperate calls for the revival of Islam emerged. Allegedly, they aimed at enabling Islam to cope with modern challenges. But many of these calls, according to Şabrî, compromised Islam's crucial tenets at best, or dispensed with them at worse.¹⁸ Such reformers, to use Şabrî's favourite phrase that he borrowed from Farîd Wajdî, even "hid unbelief" i.e. *istibtân al-kufr*.¹⁹ Under strong Western influence, many so called Muslim reformers even called for giving up of religion altogether. In Şabrî's eyes, these attempts at reviving Islam resembled the Protestants' attempts at revitalizing Christianity in the West. Şabrî wondered if leading Muslim reformers in Islam such as Jamāl al-Dīn and Muḥammad 'Abduh wanted to play the role of Martin Luther and John Calvin in Christianity. However, "both of them failed to create a new religion for Muslims".²⁰ Şabrî was certainly for the revival of Islam and for the reinvigoration of its sciences, but he was not for their reinvigoration along modern secular, or religious Christian lines that seemed to be so popular in his time. He insisted that if the revival was to be done, it must be done according to the Islamic principles and traditionally established scholarship that will ensure centrality of religious teachings and keep in

Daw' al-Islām" (Ḥalab: Al-Maktabah al-'Arabiyyah, nd). For a Turkish translation, see: Mustafa Yılmaz, *Kadınla İlgili Görüşüm ve bu Görüşün Batı Taklitçisi Sözlerle Karşılaştırılması* (Konya: Esra Yayınları, 1994).

¹⁷ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 130.

¹⁸ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 114.

¹⁹ See: *Ibid.*

²⁰ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 114.

view modern developments without giving them overwhelming preference and exaggerated importance.

Due to Western support and Western global dominance, it seemed that the leadership, even in cultural aspects, became solely destined for the enlightened élites. This, however, polarized modern Muslim intellectuals and created tension among them. The source of that tension was to be found primarily in the type of education and knowledge which they received i.e. either the traditional Islamic or the modern Western. Practically, there seemed to be no third choice. The modernists continually attacked the traditional way of thinking; its sciences, especially *'Ilm al-Kalām*,²¹ educational systems and institutions. They accused their representatives, the *'ulamā'* of stagnation, backwardness and retrogression.²² The modernists saw the solution in the abolition of Islamic education and termination of its sciences, or in their radical reinterpretation in conformity to materialistic and positivistic principles that would ultimately annul their religious meaning and purpose. Cancellation of Islamic intellectual heritage was particularly alarming for Şabırî. It would trigger dreadful repercussions for Islam as religion.²³ For him, Islamic intellectual heritage represents the very foundation of the religion of Islam. It is entirely dependent on it. If it is abolished, the religion of Islam would be critically undermined because it would have nothing to rely on. This would create the effect of pulling the rug from under ones feet. Continuous contemplation about this serious situation led Şabırî to investigate the covert assumptions and presuppositions of the modernists, *istibtān al-kufr*.²⁴ He could not identify causes that could have pushed the modernists to think in this way within his own Islamic heritage. He had to look for them elsewhere. While surveying the modern European intellectual history, the issue became clearer; Muslim modernists were

²¹ For Şabırî's criticism of Muhammad Haykal on this point, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 104-116, and for his criticism of Muḥammad al-Ghamrāwī's attack on *'Ilm al-Kalām*, see: *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 199 ff.

²² See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 57 ff.

²³ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 65, 206.

²⁴ In many instances, modernists could not have expressed their views so freely because they would have lost the support of common people who were deeply conservative and loyal to tradition.

applying the Western understanding of their recent history on the crisis in Islamic lands and minds. In order to reply to their ready-made imported allegations, Şabrî realized that it was the requirement of the time to understand modern European thought in the first place; the source from which Muslim and non-Muslim modernists in the East drew heavily, and then critically analyze their views that were in most cases covered up with Islamic vocabulary.²⁵ So, oddly enough, in order to cope with modern reformers in the religious Muslim East it was a precondition to understand the Christian and largely atheistic modern Western heritage. It is in this way that modernists' attitude in the East led Şabrî to the very sources and roots of modernity in the West. The apparent and visible manifestations, symptoms and embodiments of modernity that profoundly affected the Muslim world did not remain a subject of everlasting interest for Şabrî because, it became clear to him that these could not be properly tackled unless their intellectual and cultural basis were seriously examined from the rational and Islamic point of view, from the point of view that represented indigenous Islamic rather than modern Western scholarship.

To highlight the importance of what Şabrî was trying to do, perhaps, the words of a renowned scholar of religion, Jacques Waardenburg, should be quoted here. He says that "in the study of religion [...] there is a strong impulse coming from the systems of thought—theological and philosophical—and from ideologies—religious and anti-religious—which effect the research".²⁶ As has been shown in Part One of this dissertation, Şabrî successfully identified the key intellectual and scientific elements on which modernity rested. He also realized the importance of religious reforms in the West and their overall impact in the East. Therefore, in order to further examine Şabrî's recognition of modern circumstances and

²⁵ Abdullah Cevdet's herald of westernization paradoxically carried the name of *al-Ijtihād*, and the modernists referred to themselves as *Mujaddidūn*. Şabrî strongly criticized these attitudes in his *Dīnī Mujaddidler* [Religious Reformers] (İstanbul: Maṭba'ah al-Awqāf al-Islāmiyyah, 1922). For a summarized presentation of this book, see: Mufarriḥ ibn Sulaimān al-Qawsī, *Al-Shaikh Muṣṭafā Şabrī wa marwqifuh min al-fikr al-wāfid* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 1997), pp. 202-207.

²⁶ *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods, and Theories of Research* 1. Introduction and Anthology (Mouton, The Hague and Paris: Mouton & Co. N. V., 1973), p. 5.

paradigms, and their relation and application to the Islamic framework, it is useful to sum them up and place them in a broader perspective which will enable us to highlight their implications on religion and its study.

Ṣabrī generally appreciates the classical intellectual heritage of Europe as epitomized by the three giants; Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and as adopted in the *Kalāmī* intellectual heritage. He agrees with them to a large extent in their criticism of materialism, sophism and other extreme points of view that re-emerged and came into limelight during the Modern Age.²⁷ He recognizes their contribution in the Islamic intellectual and scientific sciences, but he stresses the evaluative, critical and wise attitude of the classical Muslim '*ulamā*' who competently discerned between what was acceptable for them and what was not.²⁸

Ṣabrī also believes that the clash between religion and reason and religion and science in the West is a serious issue and therefore needs to be carefully qualified.²⁹ In that regard, he painstakingly compares between the nature of Christianity as a representative religion of the West, and the nature of Islam as a representative religion of the East.³⁰ The *raison d'être* behind this comparison, in his view, is the clash between Christianity and reason and Christianity and science which is an isolated European experience that should not be imposed on Islam or, for that matter, on any other civilization. Furthermore, this clash should not be generalized to the extent of becoming a principal definition and bounding description of the relation between Islam and reason and Islam and science.³¹

The emerging position of materialism as foundational undercurrent of the whole gamut of modernity and the growing importance of senses at the expense of reason is yet another critical feature that —with the passage of time— eliminated any genuine interest in the importance of metaphysics. This phenomenon carried far-reaching implication for the concept of existence. Materialism limits the

²⁷ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 204ff, 230.

²⁸ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 217-219, 222.

²⁹ For instance, see: *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 44 ff. Also, see the chapter in this Part on "Religion and Reason", pp. 188, 199-203.

³⁰ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 15-106.

³¹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 15 ff.

concept of existence to a narrow physical realm excluding or rather eliminating the metaphysical. Hence, the basic task of science was to investigate this corporeal world and to describe it with the help of senses that were aided by restricted and inferior reason. In this way, the modern mind was confined within the domain of the material and sensible world, ignoring or negating everything that lies beyond that. The intellectual focus shifted from theological inquiries into the nature of God to the scientific exploration of the universe and the investigation into the nature of human being as the centre.³² In order to reinforce this overwhelmingly materialistic and naturalistic outlook, scepticism was employed as a powerful tool to clean the mind from centuries old deposits of the so called ancient superstitions that kept the humans in the darkness of primitivism and myths.³³

In Şabri's view, these elements, although philosophies in their own right, grew into a common framework that gave way to a number of other key traits of modernity which came to be regarded as its defining features. Modernity, based on novel assumptions and features needed to look into the old questions about the nature of life and give them a fresh meaning. The old religious answers became increasingly irrelevant. A kind of vacuum was created which Christianity could not fill due to the irrationality that it contains and that was not compatible with the modern age. As an alternative, scientific, or what came to be considered non-religious ideas, were introduced. For example, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution that was disseminated and integrated into modern disciplines by his followers. Eventually, religious interpretations were replaced by scientific explanations. Positivism reinforced the idea of linear progress and discarded all forms of theological and metaphysical knowledge. It announced the age of science in which science —not religion— would be the primal principle on which any constructive philosophizing would be built. Together, these elements constituted a

³² Frank Whaling classifies the Western knowledge in three categories: the Greco Roman *humanitas* at which centre is the human being, the Medieval *theologia* at which centre is God and the modern science which focuses on the nature. See: "Theological Approaches," in Peter Connolly, ed. *Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004 [1999]), pp. 230-231.

³³ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 106.

broad platform that became a standard frame of reference. As such, it called for rigorous revision of all that has been known until that time. Religion, as a special subject that could not fit into the modern framework, suffered the most.

This nascent paradigm was radically different from the Christian, and especially Islamic paradigm, to which Ṣabrī belonged. It did not differ because of the presence or absence of certain elements only but it differed also because of their order, importance and hierarchy. First of all, religion (at least Abrahamic religions) is God-conscious and God-oriented. God is immaterial and more truly existing than anything material. Rather, the material world draws its existence from Him. Therefore, the realm of existence is wider and goes much beyond the physical and sensual confines, and it is more real than the material world.³⁴ The human reason is a receiver of Divine Revelation that is communicated through Prophets and —as such— it is placed at the summit of human knowledge. Moreover, reason, aided by Revelation, controls and directs the senses. The meaning of human life is not confined to this world but it aspires and believes in the next world also. It aims at prosperous life Here and the fulfilment in the Hereafter. Whatever conforms to this view, including science, is welcome; otherwise it should be rectified and amended in order to fit in its broad context.

In fact, it appears that Ṣabrī does not expect anything affirmative from modernity regarding religion as long as it sticks to the aforementioned paradigm. The situation turns to be even more critical when it comes to the development of the modern study of religion that had been unfolding in these circumstances. The philosophical and scientific stage along with historical impediments moulded the modern study of religion in a particular fashion that was necessarily suspicious and biased towards religion. It seemed as if sympathy for the subject under study turned into pity for it. The primary question that busied the modern study of religion was naturally the issue of the origin of religion. That was so because materialistic and positivistic outlook cut it off from the metaphysical sphere

³⁴ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 161.

wherefrom religion claimed its divine origins. Closely related to the issue of origin was the issue of the veracity of religion. Since metaphysics became irrelevant, so did the claims of religion about its origins. Both of these issues characterized the period of eighteenth, nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, the period that Şabrî wrote about.³⁵ And again, Şabrî did not busy himself directly with the results of the modern studies of religion, although they were initial causes for his interest in modernity, but with their philosophical, scientific and historical foundations that inevitably conditioned the nature of the study of religion. They did not allow for a sympathetic, what to talk about a correct approach to the understanding of religion.

No matter how hard the modernists tried to project an image of *objective* modernity; the assumptions of modernity could not be objective in the case of religion. For instance, Şabrî perceives religion in a typical threefold *Kalāmî* pattern: belief in *al-Ulūhiyyah* or God, *al-Nubuwwah* or prophethood and *al-Ā'khirah* or the Hereafter.³⁶ This is equal to the Enlightenment's conception of religion as the existence of God, the soul and immortality.³⁷ Other sub-principles derive from these necessary postulates.³⁸ By their very nature, they are immaterial and that clashes with the overwhelming materialistic outlook and assumptions of modernity that are necessarily materialistic and positivistic. Subsequently, they clash with the modern approaches to the study and understanding of religion. In the context of modernity, existence of God can never be treated as a genuine principle. But if this principle is not rightfully acknowledged, then religion loses its meaning and purpose. It cannot be called religion anymore. Not at least in the sense traditional religious sciences have presented it, and in the sense that religious people experience it in their daily lives. Prophethood is firmly connected with the existence of God. If God is not proved existent, then there can be no prophethood.

³⁵ Beside Waardenburg's work on the classical approaches to the study of religion, see: Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975).

³⁶ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 25, or "Religion rests on two basic principles: belief in God and belief in Prophets".

³⁷ On this particular point, see: Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion*, p. 7.

³⁸ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 123.

The prophets would be liars, and their claims that they mediate between Him and His creatures would be considered false. Furthermore, the argument for prophethood is Miracle. It also belongs to the realm of metaphysics, and science can neither deny it nor confirm it. It is out of science's jurisdiction. Holding a sceptical position about it is equal to denying it. So, the second pillar of religion also collapses from modernity's point of view. Finally, if there is no God, then prophethood becomes meaningless and so does the belief in afterlife. In this way, modernity shatters the very meaning and genuineness of religion.³⁹

Although modernity explains away the purported meanings of religion and the truth of its fundamental beliefs, it cannot deny the presence of God, prophethood and Afterlife in sacred texts and religious vocabulary. Therefore, it needs to reinterpret them. Reinterpretation in the context of modernity and according to its philosophical and scientific basis gives religion a more humanistic touch and deprives it of the meanings it holds genuine. Consequently, belief in the existence of God turns into a myth, prophethood into the biography of a great leader and Afterlife into unrealized human hopes and fears. The same happens to the principles that derive from these three; they get radically reinterpreted, so much so, that they lose traditional religious connotations.

So, indeed, modernity's conception of religion becomes empty, void and dead. It represents human being as highly superstitious who is liable to believe in awkward myths. As such, a human being degenerates into something that is a caricature and mockery of man and that humiliates his most precious asset, the intellect.

It is from these shifting and interactive perspectives that Ṣabrī contemplates about the status of religion and its study in modern times. Turning from outward to inward, he gradually realizes that by dealing with symptomatic manifestations of modernity in the East and its relations and views on religion will simply produce superficial results that will have no vertical dimension. And, indeed,

³⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 25-30.

before embarking directly on the task of dealing with modern perspectives on religion, he first examines the intellectual basis, assumptions and presuppositions of modernity in the West and tends to discuss them so much that a careless reader may deem it irrelevant to the investigation about religion. On the contrary, it is exactly this fact that makes Ṣabrī so unique. He does not deal with the results of modernity ostensibly; he believes that it will not make a difference. Rather, he delves into assumptions and their examination, and weighs their various implications on religion. In this way he produces a meaningful discussion on a high intellectual plane that is devoid of polemical frustrations, missionary zeal and immature intrigues and this is where he discovers a deep crisis in the modern methods that are applied to the study of religion and its understanding.⁴⁰

* * *

However, it is important to note that Ṣabrī firmly believes that the changing modern paradigms and worldviews have their intrinsic intellectual value, but if juxtaposed against the Islamic paradigm they simply do not hold. Subsequently, a question arises: how is it then that these modern paradigms affected Muslim intellectuals, their understanding and study of religion so much? As to this question, Ṣabrī replies that it is not the power of the modern scientific argument that has imposed itself on Muslim modernists. It is rather the oppressive political and military power of the West that imposed its own ways of thinking on the East; as is the case with all dominating powers subduing their inferior subjects.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ṣabrī was aware of the possible criticism of his work because he criticized highly respected authors like Muḥammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, Farīd Wajdi, Muḥammad Haykal and others which was at least at that time considered controversial. See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 42 ff.

⁴¹ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 97.

Chapter II

The Problem of Defining Religion

In these turbulent circumstances where two dissimilar paradigms collided, namely, the Islamic and the Western, many terms and concepts became ambiguous and called for re-evaluation, elucidation and clarification. Surveying the writings of prominent Muslim scholars of that time, one will notice that the major theme, that they were occupied with, was the concept of religion, its place in their life, its meaning and function, its relation to culture and identity, and to natural and human sciences and philosophy. They did not undertake this work because it had been unexplored in the traditional Islamic sciences before, but because modernity brought new dimensions challenging traditional conceptions of religion “inherited from the past”. Notably, this novel investigation about the nature of religion in the East coincides with the quest for the origin and meaning of religion in the West. Various theorizations, conceptualizations and definitions were popular academic enterprise at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.¹

When talking about basics, one has to note that “religion” in the West and “*dīn*” in the East were different terms. Apparently, much time had to pass until they were moderately regarded as counterparts:

Prior to the twentieth century, the English word ‘religion’ had no direct equivalent in Arabic nor had the Arabic word *dīn* in English. They became partially synonymous only in the course of the twentieth century as a result of increased English-Arabic encounters and the need for consistency in translation.²

Modern Western conceptions of religion gained popularity and influence while traditional Eastern conceptions receded and lost their appeal in the eyes of prominent intellectuals of Orient. Ṣabrī would agree with Joseph M. Kitagawa’s

¹ See: Geoffrey Parrinder, *An Illustrated History of World Religions* (Middlesex: Newnes Books, 1983), p. 11.

² Patrice C. Brodeur, “Religion,” in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), v. 4, p. 395.

frank remark about the Westernized intellectuals in the East that they “started writing about religious cultures of Asia as though they were Western scholars approaching them from the outside”.³ Accordingly, Ṣabrī thought that there was no authentic representation of the *bona fide* Islamic traditions in such kind of writings. Rather, these modernists’ representations were reduced to Western conceptions of religion and eventually imposed on Islam. Keeping this in view, Ṣabrī’s entire intellectual contribution may be regarded as an intellectual attempt aimed at defining and reaffirming not only Islam but also Islamic conception of religion in the face of its equivalent modern perceptions.

i. Modern Eastern Conceptions of Religion

In his attempt to critically evaluate intellectual situation in modern Egypt, Ṣabrī traced back the origin of recent developments in religious and philosophical thought to a debate that took place between Farah Anṭūn (1874-1922), the Christian editor of *al-Jāmi‘ah* magazine and Muḥammad ‘Abduh, the leading Muslim thinker with whose popularity Ṣabrī remained puzzled.⁴ This debate set the tone for later discussions in Egypt particularly and the Muslim world in general.⁵ Of special interest to Ṣabrī was Anṭūn’s conception of religion that ‘Abduh, in his view, could not refute successfully. ‘Abduh ended up adopting it in due course of time leaving his legacy for subsequent followers and admirers.⁶ Anṭūn’s basic idea is that religion in the modern times does not have any reliable proof that can verify its authenticity. Elaborating his view Anṭūn argues that:

³ Joseph M. Kitagawa, ed. *The Religious Traditions of Asia: Religion, History and Culture* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002 [1987]), p. viii.

⁴ Perhaps this tone was set earlier in the debate between ‘Abduh’s teacher Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghāi and French philosopher Ernst Renan in Paris in 1883. See: Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din ‘al-Afghani’* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

⁵ See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 2, p. 55, footnote 2.

⁶ Both the thinkers have their own views of the results of the debates. Each one sees himself as the winner. For Anṭūn’s view see Replies in this *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatuh*, p. 189ff and for ‘Abduh’s, see: *Al-Islām wa ‘l-Naṣrāniyyah ma’ al-‘Ilm wa ‘l-Madaniyyah*, ed. Rashīd Ridā, 6th impression (Cairo: Al-Mu’tamar al-Islāmī, h. 1375). For Ṣabrī’s observations and criticism of both of them, see: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 1, pp. 358 ff and 441-442.

religion opposes reason and science because [religion] is a belief in a Creator who is invisible and a hereafter which is invisible too; and revelation, prophethood, miracle, resurrection, assembly, judgment, reward and punishment; all of which are intangible and irrational. Therefore, the real enemy of religions in this time is not internal but external. So, it is a new enemy brought about by modern civilization.⁷

There are a number of points that Şabrî raises about the way religion is perceived in Anṭūn's remarks. First is the assumption that religion, notably Christianity, clashes with the findings of modern science and reason and that all religions are same in this regard. They together, without exception and attention to their peculiarities, face opposition from reason and science.⁸ Second is that *al-ilm* or the true knowledge is what is offered by science and philosophy only, and what is offered by religion is not knowledge but it is blind belief based on nothing sensible, reliable and verifiable.⁹ Third is that this empirical and materialistic notion is applied on the metaphysical tenets of religion in general. And fourth, religion cannot be based on "absolute ignorance" as argued by J. S. Mill.¹⁰

In Şabrî's opinion, Muḥammad 'Abduh, who is considered to be the leading figure of modern Islamic renaissance and religious reformation, had been enormously influenced by modernity, even on some key issues such as the proof for the existence of God and His Oneness.¹¹ He interpreted miracles in a way acceptable to modern science and reason but unacceptable to religion. His reformation and modernization of Al-Azhar University made the Islamic sciences and scholars closer to the West and more distant from their own original tradition.¹² Furthermore, Şabrî claims that all subsequent deviations in Egypt were, in one way or the other, inspired by the "Great *Imām*" which is the popular title of 'Abduh.¹³ Şabrî's contention is also that 'Abduh wanted to reform Islam on

⁷ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 23. For a more elaborated version of this text, see: Ibid., v. 1, p. 127, v. 2, pp. 15, 35, 69.

⁸ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 15-16.

⁹ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 99 and v. 2 p. 20.

¹⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 22.

¹¹ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 134.

¹² See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 133.

¹³ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 133.

Western lines which would certainly endanger the conception of religion especially as postulated by Islamic teachings. However, it is apparent that Ṣabrī expected a more original contribution from 'Abduh and not just an uncritical following of modern trends and submission to the dominant Western culture that eventually led to an increase in the secularization of religion in the East.¹⁴ 'Abduh's views continued to be reinforced and reassured by significant personalities from official and unofficial religious circles such as al-Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā, al-Ustādh al-Akbar Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī and Muḥammad Shaltūt who were subsequently followed by popular writers, poets, thinkers and university professors. Consequently, they came under Ṣabrī's sharp scrutiny and some of their views will be explored in subsequent chapters.

In Ṣabrī's view, an equally alarming approach to religion and very similar to that of Farah Antūn was Farid Wajdi's perception of religion in the modern context. Ṣabrī repeats quoting him time and again, criticizing his ideas expressed in the excerpt given below:

[...] modern science was born and kept struggling with the opposing powers until it defeated them and became the authority on earth. Then, it looked at religions applied its method on them relagating them to the realm of mythology (myths). Then, [modern science] started investigating which [religion] was derived from each other and how their myths related to each other. Thus, it projected them as a collection to be read not sanctified and to enable the scholars to identify images of mind to which man enslaved himself and which he protected without sparing his life and fortunes.¹⁵

Ṣabrī raises a number of relevant points that are related to this excerpt. First of all, perhaps, is the difference of historical experience between the Western and Eastern traditions and the difference in nature of relations between science, philosophy and religion in non-Western societies, especially Islamic. Secondly, the Islamic perception of science and reason substantially differs from the Western one. Third is the origin of religion which modern science sees in some kind of human psychological or social experience which he, however, vehemently opposes. Lastly,

¹⁴ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 442.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 24, 425.

as to the role of religion, he does not see it as a way to understand the evolution of human being but as a way of perception and living bestowed by God.

What made Ṣabrī further concerned was that Wajdī, in an article replying to him just days before becoming the official editor of Al-Azhar's magazine, denied the veracity of miracles and resurrection that are, respectively indirect and direct and basic articles of faith.¹⁶ By interpreting them according to the demands of modernity, or to be more exact, the postulates of modern science, Wajdī simply explained them away.¹⁷ However, in order to avoid embarrassment, he proclaimed them as unintelligible, and placed them in the category of *mutashābihāt*¹⁸ of the Qur'ān. This, of course, has serious repercussions for the validity of the principle of prophethood.¹⁹

Ṣabrī's impression is that Wajdī's view does not differ substantially from that of Anṭūn. Rather, there is a kind of conformity between their ideas, in spite of the fact that they belong to different religions. What is common to both of them, however, is that they were trained in the modern Western tradition and both study religions from that perspective.

Ṣabrī also criticizes the modern feminist approach to religions which was increasingly gaining importance in his time, and which was ironically launched in Egypt by a male Qāsim Amīn (1865-1908) who reinterpreted religious texts related to women on purely Western liberal and feminist terms.²⁰ Amīn reflects Western feminist critique that "focuses specifically on the role that religion plays in validating and expressing the exploitation of women by man".²¹ Ṣabrī sees Amīn's argumentation as an attempt to "liberate" women from their respectful status in

¹⁶ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 425.

¹⁷ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 99.

¹⁸ For a succinct explanation of traditional point of view on *mutashābihāt*, see: Muḥammad 'Alī Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Istilāḥāt al-'Ulūm wa 'l-Funūn*, ed. Rafiq al-'Ajam (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1996), v. 2, pp. 1437-1441.

¹⁹ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 125 and v. 2, p. 55, footnote 2.

²⁰ Two major works of Qāsim Amīn are *Tabrīr al-Mar'ah* (Cairo, 1899) trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: Cairo Press, 1992) and *Al-Mar'ah al-Jadidah* (Cairo, 1900) trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson, *The New Women* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2000).

²¹ Seth D. Kunin, *Religion: The Modern Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003 and Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 12.

Islam and then use them for mean purposes, which is the real exploitation of women. His contention is that the whole feminist reading of the Qur'ān is not about women as much as it is about the filthy desires of men regarding women.²²

The impact of the practical consequences of *de jure* secularization in Turkey and *de facto* secularization in other Muslim countries had exercised great influence on the conception of religion in the East as well. These new conceptions of religion were strange to Islam and Ṣabrī was politically against them from day one.²³

The relation between religion and politics and the emphasis on the necessity of the secularization process was academically and openly expounded by 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq in his controversial book *Al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Ḥukm* and implicitly by many others. For instance, Farīd Wajdī openly supported modern developments in Turkey and held that they were "inevitable for other Muslim countries as well".²⁴ Another important Muslim thinker, Muḥammad Ḥusain Haykal, "praised the principle of separation between religion and politics".²⁵ According to Ṣabrī, their basic assumption was that the West started its progress after separating religion from public life and if the East did the same, the result would be the same.²⁶ This, at least, implied that the concept of religion in the West was identical with the concept of religion in the East, which was, however, untrue, at least due to dissimilarities between the nature of Christianity and Islam and the way religion was perceived by modern European and classic Muslim thinkers.

A number of Egyptian modern writers such as Farah Anṭūn, Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Ghamrāwī, Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, Aḥmad Amīn, Muḥammad Yūsuf, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Muḥammad Iqbal from Indo-Pak subcontinent

²² In his book, *Qawli fī 'l-Mar'ah* Ṣabrī was not familiar with Amīn's book *Taḥrīr al-Mar'ah* but implicitly there is a lot of criticism of views that Amīn held. Ṣabrī added some of his remarks against Amīn in his *Mawqif al-'Aql*. See: Ibid., v. 1 pp. 35-36, 134, 285-291, 293-294, 444-448, 485-496.

²³ See his *Al-Nakīr 'alā Munkir al-N'imah min al-Dīn wa 'l-Khilāfah wa 'l-Ummah*. Published under a new title as: *Al-Asrār al-Khafiyyah warā' Ilghā' al-Khilāfah al-'Uthmāniyyah*, ed. Dr. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī 2nd ed. (Alexandria: Dār al-Da'wah, 1989/1409). For a Turkish translation, see: Oktay Yılmaz, *Hilafetin İlgasının Arkaplanı* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 19960); and a chapter on "'Adam Jawāz Faṣl al-Dīn 'an al-Siyāsah," in *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, pp. 281-376.

²⁴ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 368.

²⁵ Ibid., v. 1, p. 162.

²⁶ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 24.

represented a prospect that argued for explanation and affirmation of religion away from rational arguments which were exemplified in the science of *al-Kalām*.²⁷ Such views postulate that the essence of religion is in subjective feelings and emotions. Interestingly, it looked for support within the Islamic framework itself, particularly in *al-Taṣawwuf*, because according to their understanding, it represented the inner non-rational side of Islam. Similar kind of competition between representatives of various Islamic disciplines used to take place in distant Islamic past. However, it was different due to at least two important reasons; the first is, according to Ṣabīrī's contention that this new dismissal of *al-Kalām* came about in different circumstances characterized by a weak reliance on one's own tradition and strong influence of modernity. This new vision was basically inspired by modern trends of understanding religion in the West particularly in relation to reason, science and emotions. The second is, perhaps, more important; that metaphysical reason as represented in *al-Kalām* is no more acceptable as valid proof in the overtly materialistic, empiricist and positivistic West. Thus, in order to cover this influence of modernity, these writers simply referred to the authoritative Islamic tradition of *al-Taṣawwuf* so that it may be accepted among Muslims. But they concealed the real causes and intentions that compelled them to choose this route. This attempt illustrates their vision of reformation that should be introduced in Islam.

Retaining the position of *al-Taṣawwuf* among the Islamic sciences and acknowledging its importance, Ṣabīrī carefully differentiates between *al-Taṣawwuf* and modern notions of individual feelings and emotions which are not rooted in rational arguments and explanation of religion as was the case in what he called *al-ʿilm al-qadīm* or "the old science". He accentuates the supremacy of the *ʿaql* in the Islamic intellectual enterprise under which *al-Taṣawwuf* commenced and flourished, and reiterates that *al-Taṣawwuf* as such cannot be uprooted from that context and treated independently from *al-Kalām*. In order to reinforce this

²⁷ See: Ibid., v. 1, pp. 186-282.

position even further he invokes the classic authorities such as al-Qāḍī 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, al-Imām al-Qushayrī²⁸ and Mujaddid al-Alf al-Thānī²⁹ who, although Sufis, held *al-Kalām* higher than *al-Taṣawwuf* in the hierarchy of Islamic disciplines. Interestingly enough, Ṣabrī strongly rejects Aḥmad Amīn's and 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd's reliance on al-Imām al-Ghazālī's preference of *al-Taṣawwuf* over *al-Kalām* by saying that "he is not *Ḥujjat al-Islām* in those opinions that he held in the end of his life".³⁰

ii. Modern Western Conceptions of Religion

The problem which Ṣabrī wanted to address seriously was what really happened to the concept of religion in the West and what was its current position there. He thought that only in this way would it be possible to comprehend the rapid changes that were taking place in the East because, as he noted, the East was importing ideas and conceptions from the West as it was importing material goods. He explicitly remarked that he "did not want our religion to be translated from the West as everything else is translated from there in Egypt".³¹ By attempting this, he tried to study the concept of religion in its Western historical, intellectual, cultural and religious context as something very dissimilar and distinctive from the concept of religion in Islam as interpreted by the '*Ulamā*' and practiced in the Muslim societies throughout distant and recent past.

As was observed by many scholars, the problem of defining religion between the East and the West perhaps arises due to the fact that religion in the former is so integrated in life and culture that it is almost impossible to distinguish it as a separate entity and establish it as a *corpus seperatum*, while in the latter, and perhaps due to a strong secularization tendency, the emphasise was on the sharp

²⁸ See: Ibid., v. 1, pp. 203-205.

²⁹ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 265.

³⁰ Ibid., v. 1, p. 266.

³¹ Ibid., v. 1, p. 406.

distinction between religious and non-religious dimensions.³² The problem seems to intensify because modern conceptions of religion were deeply ingrained with specifically Western intellectual and cultural presuppositions which necessitated a broad and thorough revision of modern Western heritage from an Islamic vantage point, which Şabrî eventually attempted to do.

Perhaps the words of Winston L. King best illustrate how serious were the Westerners in attempting to "break the code" of religion:

The very attempt to define religion, to find some distinctive or possibly unique essence or set of realities that distinguish the "religious" from the rest of human life, is primarily a Western concern.³³

Şabrî examines a whole range of circumstances in which Western theologians, philosophers and scientists theorized and defined religion. Hence, he analyzes the nature of Christianity as a representative religious tradition of the West, or what modern writers and even the Catholic Church like to emphasize as Judeo-Christian heritage. Şabrî rather saw it as a solely and predominantly Christian tradition; perhaps, due to the historical, political and demographical factors which determined Christianity to be the major religion to initially face modernity. Judaism and Islam, consequently, followed later. It seems that Şabrî accepts many results of modern Biblical criticism such as the inaccuracy and corruption of Old and New Testaments. He also seems to agree with constant intellectual and theological attacks on the chief Christian doctrines such as the Divinity of Jesus, the Original Sin, Trinity and extremely high-status of the clergy. But it is obvious that he does not go beyond the authentic Islamic criticism of Christianity as expounded in its two sacred sources i.e. the Qur'ân and the Sunnah and as elaborated in Islamic intellectual tradition.³⁴ He considers all of these as later

³² See: Winston L. King, "Religion," in Mircea Eliade, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987), v. 12, p. 282.

³³ Ibid., v. 12, pp. 282-283.

³⁴ For a brief overview of Muslim study of religions see: Jacques Waardenburg's "World Religions as seen in the Light of Islam," in Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia, eds. *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge* (Edinburgh University Press, 1979) pp. 245-275. Although some of author's conclusions are seriously questionable. For a more authentic view, see: Seyyed Hossain Nasr's

developments in Christianity, and in the spirit of Islamic belief, he fully acknowledges the religion of Jesus and his followers to be the true version of what Christianity should have been in the present. In this sense, he is managing to strike a balance between modern Western criticism of Christianity and the Qur'ānic stance on it. However, regarding criticism, he does not seem to add anything substantial to classical Islamic criticism. On the other hand, though, it must be emphasized that his approach is different from Raḥmat Allāh Hindī's (d. 1891)³⁵ criticism of Christianity whose chief task was polemical; meant to defend Islam from the onslaught of Christian missionaries by actually throwing the ball into the opponent's court. Unlike him, Ṣabrī was rather examining the Western perception of its own religion so that he could discover its implications in the writings of the modernists and orientalist on Islam and on religion in general.³⁶

Ṣabrī also seems to support the view of modern Western historians that the church was excessively dictatorial during the Middle Ages, but it seems that he does not emphasize it much. He is aware that the subsequent reaction to such behaviour of the church and later revolt exemplified in the Renaissance, distanced religion from public life: the process that is usually referred to as secularization. Historically, this development is very significant for comprehending the position of religion in the West. Islam did not go through a similar experience and did not sanction official clergy or institution that strictly represented "religious dimension" in the Western sense of the word.

In spite of many criticisms of Descartes in the West that he was one of chief thinkers who intellectually rooted this secularization process and who is celebrated

"Islam and the Encounter of Religions," in his *Sufi Essays* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973), pp.123-151; Dheen Muhammad's "Min manāhij al-Muslimīn fi Dirāsāt al-Adyān," in *The Annual Journal of International Islamic University, Islamabad*. No. 3 (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1995), pp. 124-179.

³⁵ See: *Izhār al-Ḥaqq*, 4 vols. (KSA: Al-Ri'āṣah al-Āmmah li Idārāt al-Buḥūth al-ʿIlmiyyah wa 'l-Da'wah wa 'l-Irshād, 1989).

³⁶ See: the chapter on "Comparison between Islam and Christianity," in his *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 15-67.

as the father of the modern non-religious philosophy,³⁷ Şabrî is exceedingly appreciative of his argument for the existence of God which in a strong way legitimises religion because its main component in Christianity and Islam is precisely belief in God as an immaterial, incorporeal being that is beyond our physical perception —due to which he seems to be ready to forgive Descartes all his other mistakes. In addition to this, Şabrî often brings the example of Descartes to the modernists in the Muslim world as a proof that the West is not monolithic but diverse, and that these kinds of examples should be adopted as well; not those which explicitly oppose religion. But this appreciation must be placed in the context of extreme materialism, empiricism and positivism that denied the metaphysical dimension in the West. Şabrî implicitly criticizes Descartes by preferring other modes of proving the existence of God. He is also cautious of Descartes' argument because of its subjective nature. Perhaps, the best contribution of Descartes in Şabrî's view is his confirmation of the non-physical realm that leaves room for legitimizing the most important dimension of religion; its doctrinal dimension such as belief in the existence of God, spirit and other immaterial aspects. All in all, Şabrî generally appreciates Western rational philosophy and its representatives such as Leibniz because their thought, in particular, accommodates the rational facet and gives it an edge over the empirical. Therefore, it also leaves room for religion and its indispensable metaphysical beliefs.³⁸

The strongest threat to the concept of religion in the West comes perhaps from David Hume whom Şabrî categorizes in the group of extreme materialists and empiricists who eventually got transformed into thorough sceptics. By affirming only the material sphere and denying the immaterial, Hume, in Şabrî's view, jeopardizes the ideological and doctrinal dimension of religion that includes a

³⁷ Descartes was attacked by both Protestants (the school of Voetius) and Catholics (all Descartes' works were put on the index of Prohibited books in 1663) and by twentieth century Thomists such as Gilson and Maritain for making God absent in the world. See: Leszek Kolakowski, "Descartes," in Mircea Eliade, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987), v. 4, p. 299.

³⁸ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 411.

wide range of religious beliefs and conceptions such as existence of God and spirit.³⁹ In that sense, he lies on the extreme opposite of Descartes' view of religion. Furthermore, Hume's particular criticism of miracles that they cannot be proved valid due to their violation of natural laws is contained in the writings of modernists in the East. Şabrî takes up this issue and criticizes it severely.⁴⁰

Although Kant is celebrated for his defence of religion in the West, Şabrî is not so impressed with his contribution in this regard. In the first place, Şabrî is not satisfied because he criticized the existing philosophical and theological arguments for the existence of God and presumably proved them wrong. Şabrî, however, does not concede to this. Furthermore, Kant implies that religious conceptions are not intelligible in philosophical and scientific terms which Şabrî finds repulsive and unacceptable. Even more than that, Kant's epistemology does not give validity to any concept, let alone religion. It relativizes everything by limiting the existence of the external world within the human mind. Finally, Şabrî does not find any difference between him and Hume as far as their final results are concerned. After leaving no place for religion in the theoretical reasoning, Kant apologetically establishes religion in the practical sphere by relying on ethical reason which is the basis for the existence of God and thus validity of religion. Şabrî rejects it because philosophical and theological arguments are by nature stronger than ethical ones. Henceforth, he argues that establishing religion on *al-maṣḍūl* or the weak in the presence of what is *ḥaḍil* strong, is highly objectionable and methodologically incorrect.

Perhaps, the toughest challenge to Christianity and thus to religion in the West was the Darwinian theory of evolution. It set a new stage for speculation on the concept and definition of religion in the nineteenth century. "By about 1880, however, the Darwinian hypothesis was becoming virtually impossible to resist."⁴¹ Resultantly, there are such opinions which argue that all the theorization about

³⁹ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 419.

⁴⁰ More explanation on this issue will come in the chapter on "Miracles and Prophethood" in the Third Part of this dissertation, pp. 265-267.

⁴¹ Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p. 47.

religion in the nineteenth century was a direct or indirect reaction to Darwinism.⁴² The theory of evolution further narrowed the circle of possible origin of religion to the human and not heavenly frame. The same did Darwin's other predecessors in the West, but the difference between him and them was in the method; he was a scientist and they were philosophers. At that time, science kept conquering grounds of what used to be the church's territory. Philosophy was pushed away from the church and made closer to science. Darwin's theory was like a final verdict on religion in the West. From then on, religion was treated in purely evolutionary terms which hardly allowed any divine dimension in the conception of religion. Thus, both science and philosophy in the West joined hands against religion.

Ṣabrī maintains that one of the worst philosophical systems regarding religion in the West is Auguste Comte's positivism. It literally relegated religion to the most primitive stage of human mind that once belonged to archaic times. In the line with its idea of progress, those times were superseded by theological thinking in comparatively nearer past and eventually triumphed by science recently. Thus religion in Comte's case represented a childish understanding of realities on the part of humanity in the distant past for which there is no place in modern times when realities are finally and truly explainable by science.

As a response to this rationalistic and scientific onslaught on religion, a new theorization emerged that tended to disregard both philosophy and science and to prove them irrelevant to religion. This tendency was, perhaps, best epitomized in the works of the German theologian F. D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834).⁴³ The gist of his argument is that religion does not need to be treated in philosophical and scientific terms. It is totally another subject-matter that is out of their reach. Religion is about inner feelings. Schleiermacher's understanding is "an understanding of religion as rooted in immediate pre-reflexive feeling and intuition,

⁴² Seth D. Kunin, *Religion: The Modern Theories*, p. vii.

⁴³ See: Richard Crouter, ed. *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

and only secondarily at the level of intellectual cognition or in moral systems and deeds".⁴⁴ So, a very subjective and emotional conception of religion came into fore and became extremely influential. Şabrî's contention was that religion was further reduced to nothingness after it was deemed irrelevant and unconcerned with the philosophical and scientific knowledge.

These were the ideas and conceptions that Şabrî discussed directly and explicitly. However, there were other thinkers, especially in the twentieth century, who significantly contributed to the subject of the origin, theorization, problematization and definition of religion. It is obvious that these theories had serious bearing on the overall intellectual atmosphere in the West and subsequently in the East. Thus, for instance, the legacy of Karl Marx exercised considerable impact on theorization about religion.⁴⁵ Similar is the case with Emile Durkheim who primarily saw religion as emerging from human social interaction⁴⁶ or Rudolf Otto who defined religion as the experience of the Holy.⁴⁷ Some of the ideas of these authors are implicit in the arguments of modernists in the East but most of them were unknown to Muslim thinkers of that time, and consequently unknown to Şabrî.

iii. Traditional Definition

The intellectual tradition to which Şabrî belonged had also to contribute a great deal towards his theorization and understanding of religion. In order to grasp the reality of religion it was broken down into various aspects represented and established in authentic Islamic disciplines. They may not be regarded as opposing or exclusive, as was the case in modern Western disciplines, but rather as complementary. So, although *Mutakallimūn*, Sufis, Jurists, *Mufasssīrūn* and

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. xi.

⁴⁵ N. Lobkowicz, "Karl Marx's Attitude toward Religion," in *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 26, No. 3. (Jul., 1964), pp. 319-352.

⁴⁶ For a recent reevaluation of Durkheim's contribution to the study of religion, see: Thomas A. Idinopulos, Brian C. Wilson, ed. *Reappraising Durkheim for the Study and Teaching of Religion Today* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002).

⁴⁷ Todd A. Gooch, *The Numinous and Modernity: An Interpretation of Rudolf Otto's Philosophy of Religion* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000).

Muḥaddithūn emphasized particular aspects of religion they nevertheless worked under one umbrella of common principles as did sociologists, psychologists, historians, philosophers and theologians who worked in a given framework delineated by modernity.

To review in detail how Muslim scholars defined religion would perhaps go beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, there seems to be one definition widely accepted and repeated in different compendia and by different authors at different times. Furthermore, it was put in a melodious and easy to memorize form which, with slight variations, commonly runs as following:

religion is a divine institution (*wadʿ*) which guides the creatures endowed with reason to the uprightness (*ṣalāḥ*) in this and the success (*falāḥ*) in the next life by their own choice.⁴⁸

Ṣabrī also uses this particular definition in a number of places.⁴⁹ But what is really important in this definition are the elements that it emphasizes. These elements when contrasted with the elements that are found in modern definitions of religion expose the sharp difference between the Islamic and modern Western conceptions in a simple but subtle manner, and thus become the axis of argumentation in Ṣabrī's thought. The aforementioned definition accepts the existence of God as a given reality in which religion is firmly rooted. The purpose of religion is to be guidance for those who are blessed with the faculty of reason. Religion is not imposed but it is willfully chosen. Right way of living is distinguished from wrong and life after death is affirmed and reward guaranteed according to deeds. On the other hand, in modern Western paradigm, the existence of God is questionable and hence the source for religion must be searched

⁴⁸ Abu Bakr al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, ed. R. J. McCarthy (Beirut, 1957), p. 345; Bājūrī, *Ḥāshiyah 'alā Jawharat al-Tawḥīd* (Cairo, 1352/1934), pp. 9-10; Muḥammad 'Alī al-Tahānawī "Dīn," in *Kitāb Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, v. 2, p. 503; Jurjānī "Dīn" *Kitāb al-Tarīfāt*; Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh Darāz. *Al-Dīn: buḥūth mumahhidah li dirāsāt tā'rikh al-adyān* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1990/1410), p. 33; S. Abul 'Ala Maududi, *Four Basic Qur'anic Terms* (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd., 1979); L. Gardet, "Dīn," in B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat and J. Schacht, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill and London: Luzak & Co, 1965), v. 2, pp. 293-296; Patrice C. Brodeur, "Religion," in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), v. 4, pp. 395-398.

⁴⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 103.

elsewhere notably not in the realm of divine but in the human realm; not in heaven because in modernity we are not really sure that it exists but in the nature that surrounds us. Reason stressed in this definition is a tool by which God is acknowledged but modern rationality denies God. Reason has right of choice as emphasized in modernity, but in this definition religion is the final criteria, not reason. Religion is a way of living in this world but in modernity it is merely a private matter that is not welcomed in public. Success in the Afterlife, which is the ultimate goal of religion, simply becomes irrelevant because modernity does not recognize its very existence.

iv. Şabrî's Elaboration

Şabrî's main contention that runs throughout his writings is that the cultural, religious and philosophical background of modernity ultimately conditioned the concept of religion in the West. Such an exclusively Western concept contextualized in its particular time and space was in due course of time introduced in the East and adopted by leading thinkers and reformers. However, Şabrî does not consider those reformers escaping from *taqlîd* into genuine *ijtihād* as they used to claim; rather, their *ijtihād* is only a *taqlîd* of the West which is, in his view, worse than the *taqlîd* of the traditional modes of thinking. Hence, as compared to the Islamic concept of religion, modern Western concept, in its totality, is also one but in reality there are many concepts inside it that, nonetheless, share a common platform. This observation seems very important for Şabrî.

Understanding religion necessarily involves reliance on certain modes of thinking and reasoning. Grasping the essence of religion and conceptualizing it in a certain way requires much more than a simplistic comparison of few definitions or theories from Eastern and Western traditions. That is why he delves into epistemological issues of various schools of thought and examines their possible implications on conceptualization of religion. At times, he goes even further into other aspects of philosophical thought. Thus, he deals with Descartes, Hume,

Kant, Comte and others, and examines the intellectual atmosphere that they created in the West as well as its reflection on the modernists' writings in the East.

The other methodological step which he makes is that he does not approach religion as a kind of abstraction. Rather he looks into different aspects of it and divides it into two: the essential or necessary and the derivative. By the essential, he mainly considers the doctrinal base of religion without which religion cannot be considered religion at all. Such doctrinal bases involve belief in the existence of God, the validity of prophethood along with the contingency of miracles⁵⁰ and belief in the Afterlife. There are a couple of significant points that must be observed here. When talking about these three doctrinal bases for religion, Şabrî does not confine his discussion to Islam only. In fact, he talks about the true religion, or how it should really be. Or, to put it in other words: he talks about Religion with a capital R. So, it necessarily includes Judaism and Christianity but it may not be so applicable to other religions. Hence, he talks about the true conceptions of religion that are deduced from the Abrahamic religions without highlighting religions of Indo-Pak Subcontinent and Far East for example.

The other significant point which should be noted here is that the origin of this threefold doctrinal definition of religion is a typical *Kalāmī* division. As such, he considers it valid in the modern times and applies it to the new circumstances. The *Kalāmī* conception that he uses is the typically classical one, but its application in this particular context is his own contribution. It must be noted also that this quest of identifying the essence of religion and differentiating it from science, philosophy and other disciplines has been a task of the Western scholars as well. But in the beginning of the twentieth century they did not admit any truth to the religious claims. They rather looked at them from disciplines such as humanities and social sciences which approached religion sceptically. Şabrî on the contrary lets religion speak for itself and admits its claims rationally. The mainstream trend in the modern age is to dismiss such attempts simply as religious and theological, and

⁵⁰ He says that "religions are based on prophethoods". See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 22.

hence primitive. To say this about Şabrî would be unfair because of the extent of his rational, scientific and intellectual efforts that he integrated in his endeavours. Certainly, he would appeal to Muslims, but would also appeal to others who have raised important questions against modernity. The difference between him and them is that they emerged from the framework of modernity while his criticism emerged from the classic intellectual heritage of Islam.

The derivative aspect of religion is that which draws from and relies on the doctrinal aspect. If the doctrinal basis is established, the derivative aspect may be validated. But if the doctrinal basis is not established, no derivative aspect may be validated. The derivative aspect of religion encompasses all facets of human life. It is not restricted to worship and ritual *per se*; it is also the political, economic, social and other aspects of life. This derivative aspect of religion has always been under attack, especially in modernity because that aspect was not intelligible for modern man. In fact, the derivative aspect cannot be defended without referring it back to the doctrinal base of religion. So Şabrî's main task was to answer these attacks because if the doctrinal side was not established religion would simply collapse. That is why the main thrust of his work is predominantly philosophical and doctrinal in nature.

Although this is the concept of true religion that Şabrî talks about, he does not refuse to admit that each religion which believes in these three principles may have a different character due to the historical developments that may have led to their deviation and corruption. He explicitly mentions this in the case of Christianity. To him, the Christianity of Jesus p.b.u.h. is accepted. Moreover, it is like Islam. But the Christianity that was invented after him is not.⁵¹ Similarly, modern conceptions of the religion of Islam endanger its pristine nature and traditional formulation.

After establishing these principles, Şabrî rejects modern notions that religion stems from individual consciousness or social interaction. He argues that

⁵¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 18-19.

"religion is a fact that is based on reality, [it is not based] on fulfilling some social needs".⁵² That religion is a product of human mind or society is a natural outcome of materialistic and naturalistic notions of modernity. Such modernity does not offer any other possibility. But Şabrî does not want to comply with such modernity and he does not want to be compelled to take exclusively from its repertoire. He liberates himself from the onslaught of modernity, safeguards his intellectual integrity and from that position develops a constructive dialogue with the Western intellectual heritage.

Finally, Şabrî summarizes the results of westernized Muslim approaches to the concept of religion into the following three:

- (1) Religion depends on rational argument which is weak and not convincing.
- (2) Religion depends on heart —not reason— but if it depended on reason it would have been stronger.
- (3) Religion depends on heart which is better than reason.⁵³

Then he elaborates:

the third theory [represents an] imitation of the Christian West and the first two are imitation of the materialistic West, with a trace of the Christian West in the second. The first theory is based on the assumption that reason and religion are weak because religion is based on reason which is not stronger than a sensory scientific proof. The second theory is based on the assumption that reason is strong but religion is weak because it is based on the heart not on reason. And the third theory is based on the assumption that religion is stronger because it is based on the heart while reason is weak because it is different from the heart.⁵⁴

Şabrî's own understanding then is that religion is of divine origin and that it is not any sort of human derivation. Religion has a doctrinal and practical dimension and the basic tool for its understanding is reason. Finally, emotions, senses and materialistic science count only if they are under supervision of reason.

This however takes us to another topic that is the relationship between religion, science and philosophy and this will be discussed shortly.

⁵² Ibid., v. 2, p. 8.

⁵³ See: *Marwif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 435.

⁵⁴ Ibid., v. 1, pp. 435-436.

Chapter III

Importance of the Study of Religion

Traditionally, the study of Islam in the Muslim societies was the major integrative element in philosophical, scientific and religious disciplines. Islam and religious studies were never treated separately. Religious studies were equally indispensable for every academic field and every department of life. With the emergence of modernity in the East, this position radically changed and threatened the way religion was hitherto approached, studied and understood. In the fragmented knowledge and diversified disciplines that characterizes modernity, the study of religion and its importance had to be critically revised and reinforced with new justifications. This demanding task however, becomes even more complicated when approached cross-culturally and cross-religiously.

The major problem with which Şabrî seems to struggle in this regard is the module which the modern West devised to deal with religion. The flaw in that module is that it dangerously undermines relevant traditional sciences and religion that was dependent on them. Furthermore, the best modern intellectuals in the East could do was to simulate Western modules and apply them on their own tradition. In such an environment, the importance of the study of religion from a traditional point of view, and in Şabrî's case, mainly from the *Kalāmî* point of view, needed to be looked into again, keeping in view recent intellectual developments.

Şabrî is responding to an extremely hostile environment that was created and nourished by modern Eastern *intelligentsia*. In this environment, religion was entirely or partially denied and openly or covertly attacked. *Al-ʿulūm al-dīniyyah* or religious disciplines, did not enjoy the least respect academically. Increasingly the reputation of religious sciences deteriorated socially, politically and economically. In certain areas, there was a careful imitation of Western formulas and in other it was just a parody. Hence, Şabrî often refers to this situation as making one laugh

and cry at the same time. Being aware of this attitude, Şabrî explores a number of objections to the study of religion that emerged from the new intellectualism.

For instance, there was an objection which seemed to come from the quarters of thinkers inspired by Arab or Turkish nationalism and anti-colonial sentiments. They argued that no efforts should be wasted on trivial issues such as religion at a time when achievement of military and political independence from Western powers is most pertinent.¹ There was no point in studying religion, at least provisionally perhaps, until the Muslim nations and territories were liberated from foreign occupation and influence. It was understood that attention to the study of religion could not play a constructive role in such an important process. Şabrî's response to this allegation is short and subtle; before the independence of the Muslim lands is achieved it is necessary to achieve intellectual independence.² In other words, it was purposeless to liberate the lands and remain slaves intellectually. He held that religious studies should play a crucial role in the independence struggle and become a key component in forming and establishing modern Muslim intellectuality that would assure the realization of genuine independence. This intellectuality to him is, regardless of temporal circumstances, intrinsically related to religion and religious studies.

Another objection to the study of religion that Şabrî identified was that there was not sufficient time for careful research and scholarly investigation in matters of religion.³ From another angle, it resembles a frequently heard call, even from well-known Muslim reformers, that Muslims should cease to theorize, intellectualize and philosophize but get down to "practical" work.⁴ Şabrî argues that problems associated with ideological, religious and philosophical issues are more than what may be found in practical affairs.⁵ To him, this type of objection

¹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 5, 13.

² See: *Ibid.*

³ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 6-7.

⁴ See for instance: Carl W. Ernst, *Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*. Originally published by the University of North Carolina under the title: *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 129-130.

⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 14.

may be "approximated with non-readiness of a nation to listen to the call of its prophet,"⁶ an often repeated statement in the Qur'ān.⁷ Furthermore, he argues that if time can be devoted to the study of sciences, arts and languages, there must be time to study religion too. If sciences and humanities are studied by a few, religion can be studied by a few as well.

In connection with this objection, but from a much wider perspective, Şabrî warns that indulgence in material and natural sciences and reliance on so called "tangible facts"⁸ that is not complimented with rational, metaphysical and religious sciences is extremely dangerous.⁹ In the long run, it may lead to the decadence of humanity to the level of animals. It seems as if natural sciences provided a superficial horizontal vision without having it rooted in any vertical axis. In order to avoid this, a proper attention should be given to non-material aspects of human culture. This can be nourished primarily through art and literature, and of course religious studies.

The contempt for religion in general and religious studies in particular went to such an extent in the East that it was regarded as an occupation of the poor, destitute and illiterate.¹⁰ Accordingly, it was thought that the Western educated, powerful and privileged élites have permanently passed that stage and involved themselves in more concrete and realistic matters. This reflects the positivistic conception of progress and primitive and scientific societies which the West applied on the East, but with a difference here; that the East could not apply it on anyone else except the less privileged members of its own society. The irony of this kind of understanding is that the most enlightened and educated among the Easterners were still regarded primitive in the West even in the twentieth century. In Şabrî's view, this is a result of Western global hegemony; its philosophy, science

⁶ Ibid., v. 2, p. 6.

⁷ The Qur'ān mentions many stories of ancient nations that rejected the calls of their prophets. The example of Nūḥ a.s. is the most obvious: "And every time I have called to them, that Thou mightest forgive them, they have (only) thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, grown obstinate, and given themselves up to arrogance." *Nūḥ*, 7.

⁸ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 5.

⁹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 10.

¹⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 9.

and religion or, in short, its culture and civilization that are regarded superior to the Eastern. He suggests, as pointed earlier, that there is no logical or rational reason for such a perception except the military, economic and political advancement of the West over the East.

In addition to this, Ṣabrī advocates that religious studies should not be restricted to the poor and clerics as if religion was only meant for them. It should be introduced in all segments of the fortunate classes so that other disadvantaged stratas of society take serious interest in the study.¹¹

There are other interesting ways in which Ṣabrī illustrates the importance of religious studies. For instance, in his understanding, a human being is constituted of material and immaterial aspects. He argues that a correct balance between the two should be established. By reserving so much for material aspects of culture and ignoring the immaterial, the balance between them is disturbed and human being becomes deprived of a part of his true nature. Apart from continuing the *Kalām* tradition of perceiving *al-insān* as elementarily *al-rūḥ* and *al-jasad*, he draws from many like-minded scholars in the West who comply with this view. Notably, he quotes François-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) who defines human beings in Aristotelian mode as "metaphysical animal" acknowledging the non-physical component.¹² He also quotes Auguste Sabatier (1839-1901) who holds that human being is essentially "a religious animal".¹³ Ṣabrī concludes that "religion goes halves with reason in constituting the noblest characteristics of human being". Human being as such is entitled to take care of his mundane needs but also to contemplate about his nature and the nature of the universe in which he enjoys this transitory abode. It appears impossible to prevent man from pondering on his

¹¹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 10. He wrote *Génie du Christianisme*, 2 vols. (Paris: F. Didot Frères, 1852 [1802]), trans. Charles E. White D. D., *Genius of Christianity or the Spirit and Beauty of the Christian Religion* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1871).

¹³ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 14, footnote 1. Sabatier authored *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion d'après la Psychologie et l'Histoire* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1897), trans. Rev. T. A. Seed *Outlines on a Philosophy of Religion based on Psychology and History* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, nd). Sabatier does not use the same expression but his description is to that effect. See: "The Psychological Origin and the Nature of Religion," *Ibid.*, pp. 3-27.

beginning and the end and to think about the universe's origin and ultimate end. Then, how to relate the universe to itself and define its position in relation to the surroundings? Thinking about the nature of human and the universe necessarily involves thinking about the existence of divine being that caused the existence of the world. This threefold axis of *human, universe* and *God* is essential to human thought. Grasping the natures and understanding the relations of the three to each other is crucial to human thought. A reasonable man will respond to these universal questions and consider them seriously. For him, death is a "tangible fact"; not just an irrelevant abstraction. Man wonders about what comes after it and what awaits him there. Whether he will be judged by God or not? What kind of award will he avail and is his life going to continue and how? To Şabri, these universal questions are not only inescapable but they are essential in discovering the true nature of man also. To deal with these questions and to find some answers, according to Şabri, is the elementary task of religion and rational reasoning which go hand in hand. Therefore, that deserves momentous consideration.

Modernity has, therefore, imposed the question of the validity of religion and the importance of its study in a firm and pragmatic manner.¹⁴ These questions represent the new mentality that emerged as a result of profound changes in the West. That mentality seeks "to uproot the very idea of religion from the people that has been present from the beginning of history".¹⁵ In addition to this, the general notion is that "religion is correct only in the illusions of those who believe in it".¹⁶ In the light of the above, there must be a search for the authenticity of religion namely, whether its authenticity can be proved or not.¹⁷ Because religion was regarded as an archaic remnant of the past that survived till modern times and that the total liberation of man is not possible if he is not freed from it, religion's present function and purpose must also be clearly outlined.

¹⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid., v. 2, p. 4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See: Ibid.

Şabrî opines that if religion is proved proper, then no words can adequately highlight its importance and the importance of its study. Those who deny it will finally come to know their mistake in the Afterlife.¹⁸ But he also understands that those who adopt modernity as their lifestyle and worldview are not likely to accept this kind of argument.¹⁹ Therefore, he shifts his emphasis on what modernized people are ready to listen, so he tries to approach them from that angle. Since thinkers like Herbert Spencer, Henry Poincaré, J. G. Fichte and Kant accept that religion is still important for maintaining moral values in the society,²⁰ he argues that moral values should not be based on something that we know is false, namely; religion. So, if our morals are built on religion which is considered false altogether, it follows that our morals are also false. Moreover, it is nonsense to impose such morals on society while it is certain that they are built on a myth. Hence, it follows that conceptualizing religion as “a social necessity” squarely depends on the condition that it is one of the genuine realities.

The situation that is particularly characteristic in the East and established firmly in the West, according to Şabrî, is that the intellectual élites apparently comply with the moral values but they do it hypocritically because they do not believe in the genuineness of religion.²¹ They tell masses that religion is true only to uphold the morals in the society while they themselves do not believe in the veracity of religion and hence in the correctness of moral values. For Şabrî, this is one of the examples that show the inconsistency and dishonesty of modern Muslim élites.

In order to avoid this impasse, Şabrî suggests that the existence of God should be proved beyond any doubt. The proof of His existence will ultimately legitimize religion. That is why he considers the proof for the existence of God as “one of the top existential priorities for man”.²² He also recommends that

¹⁸ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 5.

¹⁹ See: Ibid.

²⁰ For Şabrî's citations of their statements, see: Ibid., v. 2, p. 8.

²¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 9-10.

²² Ibid., v. 2, p. 4.

awareness of God is the chief requirement for all sciences and human learning under which a comprehensive integration of knowledge should be pursued.²³

Şabrî does not talk here as the sole representative of his own religious and intellectual tradition. He is concerned with the general issues of the entire human race. In that sense he is not exclusive. The modern challenges to religion have made this classic *Mutakallim* defend the concept of religion itself. Contrary to the modern notions, he validates the existence of religion as something genuine and essential to the nature of human. As such, he does not question the need for their existence; he affirms it. On the other hand, Şabrî accepts religions as historical realities and urges to treat them on factual basis within their own contexts and circumstances. He has shown this in his study of Islam as well as Christianity. By comparing them, he was particularly interested in the specificity of impact of each religion in the intellectual and cultural developments within each and vice versa namely, how different circumstances shape religious thinking and produce particular responses. It is necessary to point that he sees Islam primarily as an example of primordial religion and its aspects as necessarily mirroring the true nature of man.

Şabrî is particularly critical of the approach of certain orientalist to the study of Islam which was imbued by long-time hatred going back even to the Middle Ages. He also objects to what he calls "Christian logic" in their study of Islam which certainly reaffirms his objective position that religions should be treated impartially, within their own beliefs and practices, in their particular context and with utmost respect. So, the study of religion necessarily entails corrections of misconceptions and representation of religion in its true light.

To sum this up, Şabrî's arguments suggest that the study of religion is important to realize the nature of human being and the world he/she is living in, to ensure good living in this life and the Afterlife, to explore different cultures and civilizations and to understand their particularities, to uphold good morals in the

²³ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 10.

society, to repel any misconceptions about religion and to defend it against the onslaught of modernity, to construct a comprehensive worldview, and to play a role in important social, political and economic processes. Except for some religious aims, Şabrî's elaboration on the importance of the study of religion is not at odds with modern aims as outlined here in this brief conclusion, but it certainly holds a different view on the essence and manner in which it is to be conducted as has been partially shown up till now and as will be further clarified in subsequent chapters.

Chapter IV

Religion and Reason

Perhaps, one of the most recurring themes in the modern Western discourse has been the relation between, what appeared to be two distinct entities, namely; religion and reason.¹ Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī continuously uses its Arabic equivalent, namely; *al-dīn wa-l'aql*.² In different stages of Western history, the relation between reason and religion fluctuated from conflict to coexistence, and from superiority of one to inferiority of the other. In the past, religion and reason were the most important factors that determined this encounter but in modern times a third factor; science became increasingly significant. It virtually revitalized the problem of reason and religion and gave it a fresh perspective.³ Since then, the process of resolving the nature of relations between these three entities has been persistent and relentless. On the other hand, modern Muslim thought was immensely affected by Western discussions on the subject. This novel phenomenon posed a serious threat to the centuries' old equilibrium between reason and religion in Islamic thought. It also created an unfavourable climate for the acceptance of emerging Western sciences that were suspected to be anti-religious. Science in one way or the other thus exercised immense influence on the enfolding relation between religion and reason in modern Muslim thought as well.

Ṣabrī does not have doubts about the origin of this new problem in recent Islamic thought: it is the Muslims' *al-taqlīd* or imitation of the West and their inability to rise to the challenge of modernity from within their own intellectual heritage.⁴ It is both implicit and explicit in his writings. This sad state of affairs on

¹ Beside religion and reason, there are other similar phrases that are used to point to the same subject such as: faith and reason, religion and rationalism, and revelation and reason.

² See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 67ff.

³ For an example of such argumentation, see: Michael Polanyi, "Faith and Reason," in *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 41, No. 4. (Oct., 1961), pp. 237-247.

⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 4. For a classical definition of *al-taqlīd*, see: Muḥammad 'Alī Al-Tahānawī, "*al-taqlīd*," in *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-'Ulūm wa 'l-Funūn*, ed. Rafiq al-'Ajam (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1996), v. 1, pp. 500-501.

an intellectual level was chiefly caused by modern education which was, unfortunately, no more than an uncritical translation of Western text-books and careless importation of Western ideas into the Islamic East. No proper attention was paid to the differences and peculiarities of each tradition.⁵ That is why the newly educated Eastern generations were insensitive to the conspicuous and delicate dissimilarities between Islamic and Western civilizations.⁶ The concept of *al-ijtihād*,⁷ the only mode of ingenious renewal that modernists find appealing, becomes in their outlook a sheer imitation or *al-taqlid* of the West. Due to the fact that they did not receive appropriate training in Islamic disciplines, they were left with no alternative choice. Resultantly, in the absence of original scholarly discourse among the Muslim *intelligentsia* and due to the dearth of genuine Islamic critique, Şabrî embarks upon a diligent review of the relation between reason, science and religion, striving to establish a universal integrative balance between them in the spirit of classical Muslim scholarship. To understand this attempt as mere "theological defence" or "apology" of Islam against Christianity or the Western secular worldviews would, perhaps, be too simplistic as well as unappreciative of his erudite intellectual contribution. As a response to this understanding, it may be argued that Şabrî holds that a revision of knowledge must be carried out on the basis of rational arguments. Keeping this in view, Şabrî believes that his *magnum opus* will be of interest not only for people specialized in religious studies but also for those who are interested in broader philosophy and knowledge or *al-'ilm* in general.⁸ He further explains that the introduction of Western ideas into the East did not only create doubts against religion but that it also created confusion in thinking processes and reasoning which is, in his understanding, far more serious. This is how he manages to communicate that the arguments against religion do not matter because of their face value but that these

⁵ See: *Ma'wqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 111.

⁶ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 92.

⁷ See: Al-Tahānawī, "al-Ijtihād," in *Kashshāf*, v. 1, pp. 101-102. D. B. Macdonald and J. Schacht, "Idjtihād," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill and London: Luzac & Co., 1979), v. 3, pp. 1026-1027.

⁸ See: *Ma'wqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 4.

arguments are constructed and built on certain basis, and that is what really matters. These bases need to be looked into. Accordingly, he advocates that the entire modern approach to religion must not be taken for granted; rather it should be critically examined. Since reason and science are considered to play the most important role in constructing human knowledge in the modern times, their nature and methods must be scrutinized and their relations to religion must be carefully investigated.

As has been mentioned in previous chapters, Ṣabrī maintains that if a certain concept has been imported from, what he calls "the Christian or atheistic West", that it should not be rejected only because it is originating from a foreign, non-Islamic source.⁹ On the contrary, such ideas have to be understood, evaluated and judged before they are accepted, assimilated, rejected or eliminated from Islamic thought. In this regard, he is particularly impressed by the classical *Mutakallimūn*'s assessment of Greek philosophy, and he argues that the task of a *Mutakallim* is exactly to do the same with regard to modern ideas.¹⁰

Yet again, Ṣabrī holds that the problem of relation between reason and religion in Egypt was sparked by controversial debates between Farah Antūn and Muḥammad 'Abduh.¹¹ Ṣabrī criticizes Antūn's and other modernists' remarks. The gist of his criticism is that the Western thinkers primarily rely on reason and science when they negate the existence of God. If the modernists' argumentation is true, Ṣabrī contends, then "atheism becomes *al-madhab* or ideology of reason and science" which he finds completely improper and deplorable.¹² As a response, correcting and criticizing the Eastern modernists, he argues that the modern Western thinkers "claim that the existence of God cannot be established by *al-tajribah* or experimentation, which is, however, the chief thrust of modern science." By doing that, they narrow down certainty or *al-yaqīn* to sensual or *al-hiss*

⁹ There is a tradition from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib which says: "Do not look at who said what but, look at what was said".

¹⁰ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 317 ff.

¹¹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, p. 174.

¹² *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 67.

and experimentable things *al-tajrubah*, and thus undermine the inherent value of reason or *al-'aql*.¹³ However, not all the Eastern modernists hold the same view on the relation between reason, science and religion. While examining their various trends, Şabırî categorizes them into two main groups:

Our atheists fluctuate between two groups: a group which is ignorant of the disparity between religion of the West and the East adhering to reason while scorning our religion like the Western atheists do [with their religion] and a group which is aware that Islam agrees with reason and that it cannot be compared with Christianity, but in their overt or covert struggle against religions—including Islam—they adhere to science which is based on empiricism. They do not bow except to the judgment of science, underrating reason and logic on which we draw when we sanction chief articles of our religion.¹⁴

Continuing his elaboration he further explains that:

Astonishingly, this [latter] group from our atheists benefit from the efforts of supporters of Christian religion in degrading the authority of reason, which is not in concordance with their [Islamic] religion. So, in order to embrace atheism, those silly Muslims employ what the Christian enthusiasts use to defend their religion.¹⁵

The net result is that:

[...] the Western philosophy translated into Arabic does not offer more than a clash between reason and religion, and whoever wants to support any of the philosophers has to do it at the expense of the other. So, the Muslim reader's reason will be defeated with the Western reason, and his religion will be defeated with the Western religion, without any rationale [for that] other than *al-taqlid* [imitation of the West].¹⁶

And in another place he describes again the situation of the Muslim reader:

the unfortunate Eastern reader remains confused in front of ideas which our commissioners import from the West [...] to the East.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., v. 2, p. 111.

¹⁵ Ibid., v. 2, pp. 111-112.

¹⁶ Ibid., v. 2, p. 140.

¹⁷ Ibid., v. 2, p. 112.

i. Revision of the Position of Reason in the West

In order to have a clear picture of the problem, Ṣabrī reviews the position of reason in the Western thought from two chief perspectives: one is that of history of Western ideas and the other is reason's relation to religion. Through his writings it becomes palpable that these two perspectives of Western thought, in fact, constitute two faces of the same coin.

During the course of his revision of Western philosophical thought and especially the place reason occupies in it, Ṣabrī notices the non-stop bipolarity of reason and religion. In the times of classical antiquity, no serious religion could be treated as an imminent counterpart with which harmonization was required. For instance, Rob Fisher argues that in this period "philosophical thought did not originate neither in response to religion nor as a part of religious quest to understand the world."¹⁸ Therefore, the greatest minds of this period did not feel the need to integrate philosophy with religion.¹⁹ Religion was understood to be a separate and independent entity from philosophy. As an exception, Ṣabrī draws attention to the Alexandrian school of Plato which was of the view that human perception is something divine and although he considers this position as extreme yet he finds in it "a perfect union between reason and religion".²⁰

The Christian middle ages witnessed a systematic attempt aimed at synchronizing reason with religion especially at the hands of St. Augustine (354-430),²¹ St. Anselm (circa 1033-1109),²² St. Thomas Aquinas²³ and William of

¹⁸ Rob Fisher, "Philosophical Approaches," in Peter Connolly, ed. *Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Continuum 1999), p. 115.

¹⁹ See: Ibid. Fisher gives interesting reasons as to why there was no integration between religion and philosophy in Greece: one reason for this was that the Greek culture was polytheistic, bound up with many gods who were just as much a part of the cosmos, and governed by the same impersonal laws and principles which operate in the cosmos, as human beings. A second reason for this was that early philosophers began to dispense with the myths and unsupported stories about the world, using a critical rationality to interpret the world in order to gain knowledge." Ibid. For a detailed discussion on this issue further, see: J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1982).

²⁰ See: *Ma'wqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 247.

²¹ For a modern defense of his views on the above subject, see: Robert E. Cushman, "Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine," in *Church History*, Vol. 19, No. 4. (Dec., 1950), pp. 271-294.

Ockham (1285?-1349?)²⁴. Şabrî does not dwell much on these luminaries of medieval Christian thought except for broad discussion on the relation between reason and revelation.²⁵ However, there are two delicate examples that caught his attention. One was that reason “followed” faith,²⁶ and the other, the famous medieval view that religion was “above” reason and that religion could not be fully comprehended in rational terms.²⁷ The former limits the scope of reason within religious beliefs while the latter presupposes that religious truths cannot be grasped by reason. For him, both of these views were natural for Christianity due to its irrational doctrines. Regarding the first point, Şabrî incorporates his answer with replies that he offers to allegations of certain Eastern modernists who argue that Islam was founded on Western medieval philosophy.²⁸ He confidently asserts that there is no relation between Islam and Western medieval philosophy except the relation of time. Islam secured the rights to reason long before Renaissance in the West did and long before Descartes restored its entitlements.²⁹ Regarding the second point, Şabrî argues that religious truths are among the highest truths and that they are intelligible. Their knowledge is necessary. The example that he gives is the existence of God. He, however, acknowledges that there are other truths that are beyond human capacity of comprehension such as grasping the essence of God’s nature, but, in his view, the knowledge of that is not necessary and essential. He concludes that one such example should not overshadow the otherwise coherent relation between reason and religion.

²² *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 225.

²³ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 218.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 223.

²⁵ The various positions of Christian thought may be divided into following: revelation only, reason only, revelation over reason and reason over revelation. For a brief descriptions of these positions, see: Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1980), pp. 244-270.

²⁶ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 216.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 215-217.

²⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 216.

a) René Descartes

Modern times in the West started with extreme scepticism that practically stopped any promising development in philosophical thought. That scepticism derided the trust in reason and shook the confidence in its arguments.³⁰ This situation resembled the pre-Socratic period of the Sophists dominance and in a sense Descartes played the role of Socrates in modern times. In response to some Eastern modernists' claims such as Al-Marāghī that Descartes disseminated scepticism and gave it a strong boost,³¹ Şabrī replies, as most modern historians of the Western philosophy do, that Descartes used the weapon of sceptics against themselves. He employed the tool of doubt and sceptics' own method to destroy their claims. However, Şabrī emphasizes that Descartes' doubt was not a destructive but a constructive doubt, which he intelligently used to ensure the correctness of his method. Hence, "I doubt" is a negative segment that agrees with sceptic philosophy, while "therefore I think" is the positive and affirmative side.³² Şabrī does not, indeed, consider Descartes' method as something very much new; rather he is of the opinion that doubting in things as a method has always been there. But it has always been there unconsciously; Descartes employed it consciously and made it a part of his methodology.³³

Another important contribution of Descartes, in Şabrī's estimation, is that he established his own existence on the basis of rational reasoning, that is to say, not on the basis of his bodily sensations and material surroundings. It signifies that the realm of existence expands from material to immaterial and that immaterial is more significant than material. Descartes has certainly given the upper hand to reason over sense in his methodology. This is how he opened the way for reason to think independently from the narrow realm of material and sensational. By doing

³⁰ See: José R. Maia Neto, "Academic Skepticism in Early Modern Philosophy," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 58, No. 2. (Apr., 1997), pp. 199-220; Zachary S. Schiffman, "Montaigne and the Rise of Skepticism in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 45, No. 4. (Oct. - Dec., 1984), pp. 499-516.

³¹ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 31.

³² See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 211, 213-215.

³³ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 218.

that, Ṣabrī uses Descartes to respond to the ideas of materialists and positivists, and to secure a place for religion in modern Western thought.

Ṣabrī's satisfaction with Descartes grows bigger when Descartes establishes the existence of God immediately after establishing his own existence.³⁴ He points that this way of proving the existence of God differs from the way of *Mutakallimūn*. They prove the existence of God only after they establish the existence of world or *al-'ālam* contrary to Descartes who proves his own existence, then the existence of God and then the existence of the world.³⁵ Ṣabrī is also delighted to state that Descartes argues that God is the principle of knowledge or *al-'ilm*, that He is the principle of existence and basis for theoretical certainty, that God has created the essence of things like the geometrical and eternal truths and that He has given the laws of logic and mathematics.³⁶ It is apparent that Ṣabrī does not deliberate about religion as a whole but particularly about the existence of God, which is the principle belief in revealed religions. As such, he does not differ from his Eastern and Western contemporaries. Since the existence of God is the basic tenet of religion and its chief component and if the existence of God is proved, then it gives way for legitimacy of religion. However, this opinion may go quite well with religions which have belief in God as their chief article of faith such as Abrahamic religions, but it would hardly go with religions that hold secondary or even less important position for the existence of God in their religious system such as Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism and Confucianism for instance. It is obvious that Ṣabrī contains himself within the major religious traditions of the Middle East and neglects the rest.

Yet another of Descartes' contribution for making reason significant in the West is his abolishment of the duality of faith and reason *vis-à-vis* certainty.³⁷ The

³⁴ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 221.

³⁵ See: "Meditations III: Of God; that He exists," in *The Method Meditation and Philosophy of Descartes*, trans. John Veitch (New York: Aladin Book Company, 1901), pp. 234-249. For Ṣabrī's view, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 212.

³⁶ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 212-213.

³⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 217. Hiram Caton argues for the same idea, see: "Will and Reason in Descartes's Theory of Error," in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXXII, No. 4 (February 27, 1975), p. 95. For a

faith factor was introduced in the Middle Ages on the pretext that reason could not be saved from scepticism. Instead of basing belief on rational arguments, they were basing it on faith preferring *willpower* over *reasoning*. The Middle Ages philosophers were influenced by Christianity which does not conform to reason. Consequently, the Muslim modernists also placed faith above reason in the matters of certainty or *al-yaqīn*, because they learned their religion from the West. They thought that Descartes would influence Islam negatively as he did with Christianity. In Ṣabīrī's view, they committed two mistakes; one was that they misunderstood the nature of Islam as religion and mistook it for Christianity, and the other was that they misunderstood reason and followed the Middle Ages philosophy that was shaped by Christianity. Resultantly, Muslim modernists appeared to have struggled to return the Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages in the modern times, though Islam has got nothing to do with it.

b) Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant

Ṣabīrī's overall impression about the relation between reason and religion in the philosophy of Rousseau (1712-1778)³⁸ and Kant is that both of them, like himself, want to save religion from the growing atheism. However, the difference between him and them is that they want to save religion by "undermining reason" while he explicitly states that he wants to save religion "by saving reason from the undermining of underminers and to adhere to its logical proofs in establishing the existence of God".³⁹ This actually comes down to supporting religion by supporting reason; not by weakening it. Rousseau and Kant undermine reason and consider sentiments *al-ʿāṭifah* to be correct foundation for religion. However, in Ṣabīrī's view "reason is the strongest argument for religion" and even "the atheists know that reason is stronger than sentiments because sentiments are more like *al-*

good summary and introduction to this problem, see: Frederick P. Van Pitte, "Descartes' Role in the Faith-Reason Controversy," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 40, No. 3. (Mar., 1980), pp. 344-353.

³⁸ For his views on religion, see: *Social Contract*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. And New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., nd), pp. 113-122.

³⁹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 147.

muḥābāh or favouritism than like a proof that leads towards objective truth".⁴⁰ He argues that Rousseau and Kant know for sure that "reason is stronger in distinguishing and more just in judgment than sentiments".⁴¹ Furthermore, he also puts the nature of human being *al-fiṭrah* on the same level with sentiments because it cannot be consolidated by anything but rational arguments.⁴² He goes on to support this view by the story of prophet Ibrāhīm p.b.u.h. and his quest for the true God that is described in the Qur'ān.⁴³ The gist of his argument is that Ibrāhīm p.b.u.h. could not have sustained his natural belief *al-fiṭrah* in God except with correct reasoning and rational arguing. In a somewhat sad tone, Ṣabrī concludes that the "inherited Christian sentimentality" which is the product of irrational Christian beliefs such as Trinity, Incarnation, Crucifixion and Redemption have overwhelmed the rationality of both Rousseau and Kant and made them prefer the likings of their hearts over the judgment of their reasons.

Turning to the Muslim representation of Western philosophy in Arabic books and taking *Qiṣṣat al-Falsafah al-Gharbiyyah al-Hadīthah* as a sample from which Ṣabrī mostly draws, he raises four important points. The first is the apparent glorification of Rousseau and Kant in the war against reason in the West and the

⁴⁰ Ibid., v. 2, p. 148.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² There is a striking similarity between this and St. Aquinas' response to Damascene who argued that "the knowledge of God is implanted in all". St. Aquinas says: "To know that God exists in a general and confused way is implanted in us by nature, inasmuch as God is man's beatitude. For man naturally desires happiness, and what is naturally desired by man must be naturally known to him. This, however, is not to know absolutely that God exists; just as to know that someone is approaching is not the same as to know that Peter is approaching, even though it is Peter who is approaching; for many there are who imagine that man's perfect good which is happiness, consists in riches, and others in pleasures, and others in something else." *Treatise on the One God, Article 1, "Whether the Existence of God is Self Evident" Summa Theologica* (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), pp. 13-14.

⁴³ See: *al-An'ām*, 75. "So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude. 76. When the night covered him over, He saw a star: He said: 'This is my Lord'. But when it set, He said: 'I love not those that set'. 77. When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: 'This is my Lord'. But when the moon set, He said: 'unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray.' 78. When he saw the sun rising in splendour, he said: 'This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all).' But when the sun set, he said: 'O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah.' 79. 'For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah'."

particular accent that is placed on Kant's statement that "the time has come to sue the judge i.e. reason" and his other statement that he wanted to "save religion from the reason". This kind of descriptive presentation as expounded in this book does not impress Ṣabrī at all. There are a couple of reasons for that of which he emphasizes at least two, namely that the Arab translators have rendered that book into Arabic without commenting on it as if they approved whatever was written in it, and as if the struggle between religion and reason in the West should also be introduced in the East, especially in Islam. He concludes that, according to this book, Muslims should also undervalue reason in order to safeguard religion. Finally, as a conclusive verdict on such attempts, he explicitly asserts that Kant's philosophy of weakening reason is against the philosophy of Islam.

Analyzing the above statements, Ṣabrī succinctly replies that reason cannot be sued but by reason; not by anything else. Moreover, as a response to the claim that many philosophers who preceded Kant paved the way for this particular view he opines that:

there is nothing in the philosophy of Berkeley that prepares for such a trial. Hume is a sceptic who denies the existence of the world and existence of himself; so, it cannot be ruled out that he denies reason as well especially because denial of the self is accompanied by the denial of reason. He also denies the existence of God along everything else he denies. But, what should really be ruled out is that those who are intelligent should not seriously take those who deny their own reason. Similar is the case of Locke who denies the first principles which are accepted by all rational thinkers. It is the weakest of opinions related to human knowledge which is not accepted even by Kant; so, there is no way that it can be considered as a prolegomena to Kant's criticism of reason.⁴⁴

Secondly, the arguments that are presented against reason in the name of great Western thinkers are rather of rhetorical nature and perhaps even less than that. As an example for such level of extremely weak argumentation he quotes Rousseau that "thinking is contradicting the nature of human and that the thinking man is a mean animal".⁴⁵ The other quotation is that "sciences or *al-'ulūm* lead to

⁴⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 149-150.

⁴⁵ Ibid., v. 2, pp. 150, 280.

corruption of morals and that culture is nearer to evil than to good".⁴⁶ Ṣabrī's response is very critical:

if *al-'ilm* leads to the corruption of morals, and reason to atheism then should we prefer the absence of reason i.e. foolishness or madness, over reason; or ignorance over *al-'ilm*, so that we become fools because we believe in God and His prophets or we remain ignorant so that we can be considered among the good people?⁴⁷

Ṣabrī triumphantly elaborates that:

there is no other way but to accept that reason and science are the best of God's blessings on man, and that they combine his welfare and happiness, and that there is no stronger protector from evil than reason and more successful than science. At least, reason and science are powers in the hands of its owner like money and weaponry which may be used as tools for evil. Nevertheless, no one is of the opinion that poverty is more beneficial than wealth.⁴⁸

Accordingly, Ṣabrī concludes that the opposition between religion and reason is not possible in principle but that it is possible in Christianity due to its corruption. Moreover, he argues that even if reason is against a religion, that religion cannot be defended even if the defender was Kant himself who has been so profusely glorified for his rational excellence.⁴⁹

Thirdly, it is obvious from that representation that the weakness in Western philosophy is a result of a weakness in their religion. They "defeat their reason and destroy it to safeguard their religion instead of reconstructing their religion by using their reason".⁵⁰

Fourthly, Ṣabrī sees a kind of lesson that Muslims should learn from the Westerners' commitment to the Christian religion which does not even confirm with reason. Even then, they "give up reason but they do not give up their

⁴⁶ Ibid., v. 2, p. 150.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., v. 2, p. 151. Compare it with Francis Bacon's statement that "Knowledge is power". See: *Meditationes Sacrae* [Sacred Meditations] (1597) "De Hæresibus" [Of Heresies].

⁴⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 151

⁵⁰ Ibid., v. 2, p. 152.

religion".⁵¹ His contention is that religion which is opposed by reason cannot be true, because religion is given to the men who are bestowed by reason. Furthermore, reason is the foundation for religion and axis for accepting its teachings *al-taklīf*. He argues that when the Westerners defeat reason in order to defend religion they in fact lose both, because true religion cannot be found but by the help of reason.

Muslim modernists in the Islamic East underestimate reason because they blindly follow the West; not because they want to support their religion as the Westerners support theirs. For Ṣabrī, they are an interesting example; they undervalue reason in order to give up their religion, Islam, which is in conformity with reason, while the Westerners undermine their reason in order to save their religion. The Westerners are interested in protecting their religion even at the expense of reason, while Muslim modernists are interested only in the blind imitation of the West even if that leads to the undermining of religion. The method that the Muslim modernists employ is that they adopt the underestimation of religion from the Western atheists and the underestimation of reason from the Western religionists. They do not respect the harmony between religion and reason in Islamic scholarship so they lose both of them by importing some Western modules. Interestingly, in his final remarks, Ṣabrī suggests to the Muslim modernists that they should have learned to respect reason from the Western atheists and learn to respect religion from the Western religionists.⁵²

c) Herbert Spencer

Ṣabrī also dwells on Herbert Spencer's position on the relation between reason and religion. Spencer's view is that:

it is better for religion to leave the stubborn reason which cannot be satisfied except with a logical proof; it is better for [religion] to leave reason

⁵¹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 153.

⁵² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 153.

and to rely on human *belief* because [religions's] nature cannot be satisfied by a logical proof.⁵³

Şabrî argues that these quotations include instances of wide differences between the mentalities *al-'aqliyyāt* of classic Muslim and modern Western scholars. In order to base a religion on rational arguments, that religion itself must contain such strong logical foundations and rational grounds. This fact, that Islam contains them, enabled the *Mutakallimūn* to establish the chief articles of faith or *Uṣūl al-Dīn* rationally. Christianity on the other hand, does not have them; so it is natural that it cannot be established on rational grounds, and it is natural, therefore, that there is antagonism between reason and religion in the West.⁵⁴

Şabrî also draws attention to a delicate point in which he appreciates Spencer's admiration for reason which coincides with *Mutakallimūn*'s regard for it, and contrasts it with Farīd Wajdī's despise for reason, logic and *'Ilm al-Kalām*. Furthermore, he highlights al-Marāghī's regard for reason but criticizes his agreement with Spencer in equating between the position of Christianity and Islam *vis-à-vis* reason.⁵⁵

* * *

As can be understood from Şabrî's analysis, reason in the West had two perpetual enemies that followed it from the very beginning of the philosophical thought. These were (a) extreme scepticism and (b) exclusive materialism. Hence, the whole history of reason in the West may be observed from these two perspectives. He strongly suggests that even in modern times, reason suffers primarily from these two illnesses. However, he remarks that this remained the state of affairs in the West but for short periods of time when figures such as Socrates in the ancient times and Descartes in the modern times restored trust in

⁵³ Şabrî is using the free translation and presentation of Spencer views by Aḥmad Amīn and Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd in *Qisṣat al-Falsafah al-Gharbiyyah al-Ḥadīthah* (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa 'l-Tarjama wa 'l-Nashr, 1936.), p. 478. Also, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 122-124.

⁵⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 122-123.

⁵⁵ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 122-123.

reason.⁵⁶ From Greek times, through the Middle Ages and to the modern times, the quest for certainty *al-yaqīn* has always been marred by the clash between reason and religion in the West.⁵⁷ Ṣabrī summarizes this struggle, especially in modern times, by stating that "Western Christian scholars, in their quest for truth or *al-ḥaqīqah*, degraded the position of reason in defence of religion and in response to atheists who adhere to reason".⁵⁸ He sharply differentiates his own position *vis-à-vis* the aforementioned view proclaiming that he, "while defending religion, defends reason."⁵⁹

It is an unchanging constant, contrary to the Islamic philosophy where reason and religion coexisted harmoniously throughout ages with modest exceptions here and there which Ṣabrī tends to correct or even reject. So, he is not only critical of the relation between reason and religion in the West but he is also critical of positions of some medieval Muslim thinkers who were largely quoted by modernists to support the view that there is a clash between reason and revelation even in the classical Muslim thought. Ṣabrī does not seem to cry about the past and defend the classical thinkers at any cost. If their views were such, he does not mind criticizing them even if they were of the stature of Al-Ghazālī or Ibn Rushd. This position in fact reflects Ṣabrī's methodology as an independent thinker who does not give tradition much authority over his views; rather he emphasizes the role of reason in all situations which is to determine the situation according to ever-changing circumstances. As such, on the one hand he argues for continuity, development and rejuvenation of Muslim thought rather than dry quotations from classical sources and their application to present situation; and on the other, he vigorously opposes the modernists' position of blind imitation of Western modules as has already been mentioned earlier.

Claiming that the relation between reason and religion in Islamic thought has always been that of harmony and coherence would perhaps be too general a

⁵⁶ See chapters on "Materialism" and "Scepticism" of this thesis in Part One.

⁵⁷ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 111.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 111.

statement. If examined in detail within its own framework and on its own terms, examples of the struggle to harmonize between the two are present in almost all major works of Muslim thinkers. Such a general statement, moreover, cannot be justified in a scholarly researcher. But, it seems likely that the often repeated claim of Muslims that there is no clash between reason and religion in the Muslim thought comes as a response to the situation between the two in the West. In this sense, it can be justified, because Muslims did not experience such a sharp opposition between reason and religion in their thought. Moreover, modern Muslim exploration of the relation between reason and religion is a response to the orientalist's writings on the same subject in Islam which tend to shift the clash between reason and religion from the West to the East, and particularly Islam. It may be also referred to the overall climate in global human thought which was dominated by Western thought. In this regard, Şabrî is very careful in distinguishing between the Western and Islamic experience of reason and religion. By identifying Western modules in treating religion among the Muslim modernists, he struggles to prove how inappropriate and inapplicable they are on religion in general and Islam in particular.

* * *

Şabrî's principal argument regarding reason is that it is in compliance with religion.⁶⁰ In this, he is chiefly guided by his own religious and academic traditions. On a number of occasions he copiously quotes verses from the Qur'ân and sayings of the Prophet p.b.u.h. which generally praise the human intellect and its correct use.⁶¹ The axioms of Muslim jurists and theologians are also among the primal principles on which he heavily relies. To note only a few of them: that the prime duty of a believer is to know God *ma'rifat Allāh*;⁶² that man is not obliged *mukallaf*

⁶⁰ Interestingly, he never contrasts reason with revelation as is common practice in the West; he always juxtaposes reason with religion.

⁶¹ For instance: They will further say: "Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we should not (now) be among the Companions of the Blazing Fire!" *Al-Mulk*, 10.

⁶² See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 314.

to practice religion unless he is *al-ʿāqil*;⁶³ and that he is judged in the Hereafter only if he is *al-ʿāqil*;⁶⁴ and that the intellect *al-nuṭq* is the defining feature that discerns human beings from animals⁶⁵. So it is not strange that he sets this kind of tone from the very beginning and states in unequivocal terms that his mission is to prove that there is no contradiction between reason and religion as is claimed by the Muslim and non-Muslim modernists in the East. Even more than that; he asserts that it is not enough to prove that there is no contradiction between the two, but, as a matter of fact, what needs to be emphasized is that reason supports religion. The origin of religion according to him is doubtlessly divine and in that sense religion is disclosed from above. But in human realm, religion is based on a set of rational arguments that buttress it. Therefore, in his understanding, reason and religion are inseparable and there is no other tool available to man to comprehend anything including religion.

That this is not a mere isolated view within the classic Islamic tradition and that reason occupies a significant place in the modern Western thought, Ṣabrī quotes a number of Western thinkers to prove that Muslim modernists have one-sided perception of modernity. However, he is well aware that the position of reason in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries was on decline in favour of more positivistic and materialistic views.⁶⁶

The other end of this problem is religion of the West; notably Christianity. Ṣabrī does not emphasize the past existence of pagan religions in the West and their influence on Christianity as Al-Qaḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1024) has done in the middle ages⁶⁷ or Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadawī (1914-1999)⁶⁸ in the modern times, but it

⁶³ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 100.

⁶⁴ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 313.

⁶⁵ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 70, 314.

⁶⁶ Compare with Henry Le Roy Finch who also opines that: "There has been a marked decline in the prestige of reason in the twentieth century, due partly to a changing conception of nature of science as well as to an increasing awareness of the conventionality of what passes for reason." See: Henry Le Roy Finch, "Reason," in Mircea Eliade, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987), v. 12, p. 223.

⁶⁷ Al-Qaḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Al-Mughnī fi abwāb al-ʿAdl wa ʿl-Tawḥīd* (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Miṣriyyah li al-Taʿlīf wa ʿl-Tarjamah, 1965), v. 5 p.

⁶⁸ See: *Mādḥā Khasir al-ʿĀlam bi Inḥiṭāṭ al-Muslimīn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-ʾImān, nd.), pp. 149-151.

seems, however, that he emphasizes two types of Christianities, an idea that gained significance in the modern West as well: one is the Christianity of Jesus son of Mary and the other is Christianity that subsequently ensued in later generations. In Şabrî's view, the former is equal to the primordial archetype of religion that is also called Islam, while the latter is, by and large, a construction of human agent. The relation between the former type of Christianity with reason is necessarily that of harmony and coherence, while with the latter, it is clash and incongruity. Since there is no problem with the former type of Christianity, there remains the problem with the later whose historical existence and actual presence in the West today is undeniable and which is the real bone of contention in the discussion at hand. Hence, "measuring Islam with Christian norms and imitating the West in every respect is the first sign of weakness in the modern East".⁶⁹ Şabrî elaborates on this point even further by suggesting that the modernists have adopted the Western line of argument in both study of religion and its support without even knowing what compelled the Westerners to adopt that line in the first place. The Westerners strive to weaken the position of reason and strengthen the position of emotions because of the opposition between reason and religion in their religious tradition especially in the view of the Trinitarian belief which is from one side the chief article of faith while from the other, it is absolutely irrational. Such kind of opposition is not present in Islam. By adopting the Western type of argument in support of Islam is detrimental to both reason and religion in Islam. Şabrî unequivocally states that "religion is void of reason among their atheists while reason renounces religion and abhors it among their religionists".⁷⁰ He finally concludes that neither reason should be degraded nor impossibilities such as the Trinity should be invented in order to strengthen the position of Islam.⁷¹

So, the sum total of the relation between Western reason and religion is that reason is maligned by scepticism and materialism, while religion is disfigured by

⁶⁹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 91.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 92.

⁷¹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 91.

the passage of time. Therefore, chances of harmonious relationship between the two are extremely meager. Since Islam does not suffer from any of these, it is not correct to apply such modules developed in the West for solving the impasse between reason and religion. However, since the existence of God can be established on rational arguments, and since religion is revealed to the man who is bestowed by reason, religion can be understood and studied rationally. Materialistic and positivistic attitudes towards religion therefore do not hold and religion becomes a category with which reason can seriously engage.

What about religion and science then? That will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter V

Religion and Science

Science is credited to have exercised tremendous impact on modern intellectuality and religion in the West, and the rest of the world. If philosophy, religion and science are juxtaposed and examined in modernity, the result will be that science will assume the place of authority and be considered the criterion for both philosophy and religion.¹ Science will be in a superior while philosophy and religion in an inferior position. This view has been especially advocated by materialist and positivist philosophies that remained influential from the end of the nineteenth to well into the first half of the twentieth century.² This critical period coincides with Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī's life and intellectual engagement. His cerebral endeavour is, therefore, significantly conditioned by these external circumstances under which he worked and which he eventually encountered and criticized.

Ṣabrī carefully examines claims of the Eastern modernists regarding the relation between religion and science. The prevailing opinion among them was that they were irreconcilable.³ But, in Ṣabrī's view, their understanding of the nature of this conflict varied. For instance, Farah Anṭūn opines that science should be placed in the realm of reason while religion should be placed in the realm of heart.⁴ If religion becomes reasonable, it turns into science. By reasonable he means "rational arguments based on test, experiment and observation."⁵ Ṣabrī sees in that a tendency to assume that science is in conflict with religion chiefly because it is based on reason which is incompatible with religion. Principally, therefore, the core problem lies in the relation between reason and religion which, eventually,

¹ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1946), pp. 479-480.

² Werner Heisenberg says that "Modern science in its beginnings was characterized by conscious modesty [...] (which) was largely lost during the nineteenth century due to the rise of mechanistic materialistic philosophy." *Physicist's Concept of Nature* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1958), p. 152.

³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 45.

⁴ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 67.

⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 340.

extends to science because science is based on reason and hence it is closer to reason than to religion. Religion is irrational and therefore sentimental and emotional.

Şabrî dwells long on establishing an impressive line of arguments which prove not only that there is no conflict between religion and reason but essentially that religion is buttressed by reason and based on it. In Şabrî's view, Anṭūn is ambiguous; it is not clear whether he accuses religion to be "in conflict with reason or with senses or with both of them."⁶ In addition to that, he points to Anṭūn's ignorance of the difference between reason and science; the former being based on abstract rationality while the latter on physical senses. Hence, it is not the same to claim that religion is in conflict with abstract rationality on one hand, and to claim that it is also in conflict with material evidence that are received through senses on the other. Obviously, these are two separate issues in Şabrî's eyes but Anṭūn wants to make them one. Regarding this point, Şabrî suggests that Anṭūn tallies up the conflict between reason and religion so that Christianity, Anṭūn's own religion, does not remain the only religion that conflicts with abstract reason, but, in fact, that all religions are in conflict with reason, which is not true especially for Islam.⁷

The second view in defining the conflict between religion and science argues that they are incompatible because the thrust of science is on experiment *al-tajrubah* and observation *al-mushāhadah* which are not applicable to religion.⁸ The characteristic of this view is that it does not count on reason in attacking religion but instead falls back on senses. Şabrî suggests that the substance of this argument is that senses are better *afḍal* than reason. He out-rightly rejects this view because reason, according to him, is the chief distinction of human beings which makes it different from animals which, on the other hand, have better senses than humans.⁹

⁶ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 69

⁷ See: Ibid.

⁸ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 68.

⁹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 70-71, 335.

So, those who want to examine religion by their senses only, degenerate to the level of the ignorants of the tribe of Israel who requested to see God.¹⁰

That religion and science were not compatible and that the relation between them was essentially characterized by antagonism was also shown in literary pieces, especially poetry. Şabrî generally remarks that modern Eastern élites who were groomed in the spirit of Western culture were prone to atheism, disbelief and disregard for religion. He specifically analyzed Muḥammad Iḥsān's poem titled *The New Prophet*¹¹ which considered science to be the prophet of modern age. All this led him to conclusion that "the atmosphere in Egypt is poisonous".¹²

However, before proceeding any further, a few remarks are in order: Şabrî fundamentally discusses the prevailing opinions regarding the relation between religion and science which can be summarized in the so called "conflict theory".¹³ So, what some researchers termed as military terminology like "attack," "stronger," "weaker," "territory," "victory" etc. is common in this kind of discourse on religion and science.¹⁴ Secondly, he criticizes and rejects these views using sophisticated reasoning rather than scriptural evidence. Thirdly, he deals with reason, science and religion chiefly from a methodological point of view; that is, not from a point that certain scientific theories contradict certain views which are revealed in sacred scriptures. Fourthly, he discusses reason, science and religion in an integrative way and it is difficult to analyze the relation between religion and science without referring to reason and religion and vice versa. All these points, of course, are of immense importance to the study of religion.

¹⁰ Şabrî is referring to the following verse: "And remember ye said: 'O Moses! We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah manifestly,' but ye were dazed with thunder and lighting even as ye looked on." *Al-Baqarah*, 53.

¹¹ This poem was originally published in *al-Abrām* newspaper. Şabrî reproduced it in his *Mawqif al-'Aql* in two places: v. 1, p. 353 and v. 2, p. 358.

¹² *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 358.

¹³ See: Gary Ferngren, ed. *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp ix-xiv. Two chapters in this book are especially pertinent to this topic, see: Collin A. Russell, "The Conflict of Science and Religion", pp. 3-12 and David B. Wilson, "The Historiography of Science and Religion", pp. 13-19.

¹⁴ See: Ronald L. Numbers, "Science and Religion," *Osiris* 2nd Series Vol. 1, Historical Writings on American Science (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 59-80.

The general framework within which Ṣabrī elaborates his views is based on the following: science does not oppose reason and it cannot oppose what reason supports. On the other hand, reason supports religion because it proves the necessary existence of God; hence, science cannot oppose religion because reason supports it.¹⁵ However, if there is conflict between the two, the fault should be searched within science and the victory *al-ghalabah* will be for reason because “variable science” cannot win over reason that is based on “invariable principles”.¹⁶ So, his position on the relation between science and religion is diametrically opposed to the view of modernists in the East.

i. The Nature of Scientific Inquiry and Religion

Attempting to resolve the prevailing view that the relation between science and religion is necessarily characterized by disagreement, Ṣabrī critically examines outstanding arguments which advocate for such kind of understanding. He also objectively suggests what may be the cause of disagreement between science and religion, if there may be any. To achieve that, he opts for a unique undertaking. He compares between modern sciences and ancient disciplines. He investigates the ways in which science is perceived in the West and looks into the different modes of its interpretation in the East. He compares between senses as the basis for science and between reason as the basis for religion and philosophy, and how and in what ways these perspectives can be related to religion. In all this, he is extremely careful not to wrong any of these disciplines. However, he is critical of those who, for instance, support one discipline over the other, or who support senses over reason on irrational and partisan grounds, and who oversimplify the compounded relations that either bound them together or set them apart.

A relevant question which Ṣabrī seems to deal with is the nature of the modern scientific investigation and its relation to the requisites and requirements necessitated by the nature of religion. Perhaps, it is important to note that this

¹⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2. pp. 275-276.

¹⁶ See: *Ibid.*

question seems more vital in resolving the enigma between science and religion than whether certain scientific theories agree with some religious postulates or not, or is a certain scientific theory correct and a religious belief not so. He, however, seems to be more concerned about the ways and possibilities of how religion can be approached scientifically. Hence, it must be emphasized that discussion of particular scientific theories which apparently contradict religion comes largely as examples within the broad discussion of the nature of scientific methodology, rational reasoning and idiosyncrasies of religious positions.

Ṣabrī does not perceive scientific investigation as absolutely correct and infallible in attaining certainty of knowledge which is a requirement for both rational reasoning and religion. He sees modern scientific methodology as having been developed through continuous and dedicated work which, in modern era, started with Bacon and which gradually improved, got amended and refined over time. That process is still going on and is never ending. The rules of scientific inquiry are therefore tentative; not necessary, unlike the rules of rational argumentation. For example, a miraculous event can change the results of science.¹⁷ The day of Resurrection will abolish laws of natural sciences and the reasoning attached to it, but it will not abolish absolute rational reasoning.¹⁸ Therefore, it can never attain absolute perfection and thus can never yield certain knowledge. On the other hand, the nature of religion, particularly, religious beliefs, requires certainty. It cannot be satisfied with probabilities, doubting, guessing and experimenting which are so much the nature of science.

Scientific investigation is necessarily situated within the physical world. Its primary concern is materialistic description of processes within nature.¹⁹ For Ṣabrī, this is a sort of self imposed limitation and rules which scientists should respect and not trespass. The basic tool that is available to a scientist is his senses and reasoning. Nevertheless, there are three problems that are faced by a scientist; the first is that

¹⁷ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 453.

¹⁸ See: *Ibid.*

¹⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 277.

material realities of the world are temporal *ḥādithah*. The second is that senses are not absolutely reliable. And the third is that scientist's reasoning is closely tied within the frame of natural world and his own senses. Let's take them one by one.

a) Ṣabrī's understanding regarding the nature of material world is basically that of *Kalām*. Matter is fundamentally temporal, it came into being from nothing, it is ever changing and it is dependent on something beyond itself. Physical world as such cannot be a reliable source for certain knowledge that is required in metaphysical realities and religious beliefs. All knowledge acquired from physical matter will necessarily acquire characteristics of its source. So, such knowledge will be conditioned by attributes of temporarity, dependence and change and will thus fall short of achieving certainty or *al-yaqīn* about issues that are outside the physical world.

b) Ṣabrī maintains that senses perform the role of sensors. They are created to respond to material sensations and thus their role is limited to their recognition only. They transmit information from the world into brain/reason and their duty stops there. Humans and animals share this feature with the difference that animal senses are more sophisticated but their brain is not. Senses, even if they are healthy, do not always give a correct picture of material reality. Information provided by senses is clearer *awḍah* and that appeals to common people but it is not stronger *aqwā* than reason. Strong sensations, such as strong light, may destroy senses, but strong arguments cannot damage reason; they can only improve it. Senses commit mistakes and reason corrects them. But even then, senses continue to make those mistakes as in example of the size of moon and stars.²⁰ So, knowledge provided by senses is ultimately conditioned not only by the nature of matter but also by the nature of senses. In addition to attributes caused by the material world, knowledge provided by senses has further characteristics: it is raw unprocessed information, it is isolated and not related to other facts, and it is not reliable without close examination and approval of reason.

²⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 338.

c) Therefore, reasoning in scientific inquiry is limited to the givens of material world and human senses. To infer anything that is beyond them and to surmise anything that is not grounded in material realities and that cannot be re-verified and reconfirmed by senses is simply discarded as illusion and imagination. For Şabrî, this way of reasoning does not seem to be a problem as long as it is the requirement of science in examining natural phenomena. But to extend this requirement to everything else i.e. philosophy, religion and generally human thought, and take away the metaphysical quality of reasoning reducing it to material and sensational realms is simply wrong. This leads to restricted inductive reasoning that emanates from the material world and remains within its boundaries. He says:

when they speak about metaphysics they go against their empirical principles and give a negative judgment about it [...]. Given their specialization in natural science, they are obliged not to speak about what is beyond its boundaries; neither negatively nor positively. It is strange that after they were ignorant about this position, they tried to open up the kingdom of metaphysics with a tool specialized for natural science which is empiricism. They also did not know that what is denied cannot be experimented on even if it is material. This means that their negative judgment is not based on experiment. It can either prove it or be silent about it, while its negative judgment is in the real sense negation of knowledge about the negated.²¹

Eventually, Şabrî suggests that the reduction of existence to material actualities denies metaphysical realities. Accordingly, whatever is dependent on such metaphysical realities in human thought and particularly in religion and ethics will fall apart. Hence, scientific reasoning provides knowledge that is material, partial, amendable and upgradeable. Such reasoning cannot grasp metaphysical realities let alone verify their authenticity.

²¹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 278.

Ṣabrī explains it further by giving an example of the *nature*²² of God. Since God is not material, and since he is not within the nature, He can never be the object of such scientific inquiry.²³ Furthermore, since the existence of God is the chief article of faith and the main axis of religion, the role of scientific inquiry in religious studies is rather marginal and unessential. A metaphysical reasoning therefore assumes a more important position than science in the study of religion. Accordingly, science is not entitled to talk about the existence or non-existence of God because God is out of its reach. It is neutral and its true position is that of an agnostic.²⁴ Science was designed to study nature; not to study what is beyond nature.²⁵ Science can only claim that it could not find God within material and natural phenomena; but it cannot claim that God does not exist. That science cannot find God in nature is not disputable because even that claim is partial, theoretical and waiting further verification. It is not final and definite. Furthermore, it cannot guarantee that future scientific investigations may come up with strong verifiable evidence. Philosophers and theologians do not claim that God is material and that He is within the world; they claim that He is immaterial and that he is not within nature. So, instead of denying the existence of God, science should accept its limitations. Science should limit its judgment within its jurisdiction. If it cannot find a proof for the existence of God, it does not mean that God does not exist; or as put by *Mutakallimūn*: *'adam al-wujdān la yadull 'alā 'adam al-wujūd*. Science cannot investigate what is beyond nature, and if it does, then it is trespassing its own limits entering into metaphysics which is an alien territory for it.

Another problem with materialistic and positivistic philosophies —which confine existence into material existence, and for which the only true knowledge can be attained through science— is a tendency to adopt science dogmatically, and

²² Ṣabrī does not use this word and neither do other Muslim scholars when talking about God. It is also not present in the vocabulary of classic Islamic theology and philosophy. But I do not find a better word to use in English.

²³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 335.

²⁴ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 276.

²⁵ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 277.

to treat it as a kind of system comprised of infallible truths and realities. This is commonly referred to as scientism and it is an extreme view which resembles some religious positions, because scientific results are adopted with devotional zeal and defended with religious fervour. All other positions are dismissed as simply incorrect and false. In Şabrî's view, the problem lies with them. They created the tension between science and religion, and they are responsible for what came to be known as the theory of conflict.

The solution that Şabrî offers to bridge this impasse is to restore the right of reason to be metaphysical, to let it be the final authority in science and to let it direct scientific investigation. In this way, science will still be studying the natural phenomena, but it will work under the umbrella of metaphysics. In this way, there will be a plenty of place for religion and there will be no conflict between science and religion.

ii. Issues between Religion and Science

According to Ronald L. Numbers,²⁶ the most influential book in the West, that surveyed the relationship between religion and science and that set the tone on this subject is John William Draper's (1811-1882) *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*²⁷ and Andrew Dickson White's (1832-1918) *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*.²⁸ The author also argues that the two books do not differ essentially.²⁹ Şabrî is aware of Draper's book and he quotes it in a number of places.³⁰ The issues that the book raised were still relevant even in the West till the fifties of the last century when Şabrî passed away. Since the issues between religion and science were outlined in Draper's book, it is useful to compare them with issues discussed by Şabrî.

²⁶ See: "Science and Religion," in *Osiris* 2nd Series Vol. 1, Historical Writings on American Science (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 59-80.

²⁷ 8th ed. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1881 [1874]).

²⁸ (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898).

²⁹ Ibid., p. 59.

³⁰ The Arabic title according to him is *Al-Munāza'ah bayn al-'Ilm wa 'l-Dīn*. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 224. The book was translated into Turkish by Ahmet Mithat, *Niza-ı ilmi din* (Dersaadet: Tercüman-ı Hakikat, h. 1313).

There are issues that Şabrî did not take up such as the conflict between the Biblical view and the findings of science regarding the position of Earth and Sun in the universe, the shape and the age of the earth and the position of heaven and hell.³¹ The reason for not mentioning them was perhaps that this was never a bone of contention in Islam. There are also issues which permeate his whole work, like the issue of the criterion of truth. However, he does not deal with it in the way Draper does. Draper contrasts the scientific standard for truth as the revelation of nature with Protestants' view as the truth found only in Scriptures, and with Catholics' view that truth is always with the Pope.³² Şabrî rather talks about the criterion of truth in a systematized way as being grasped by reason with the help of senses and divine revelation.

The first issue is about the controversy regarding the origin of earth and the two opposing views i.e. the religious view of creation and the scientific view of evolution.³³ For him, the universe could not have evolved by itself and it is not a position intrinsically related to science. It is rather a view held by some scientists. If science is intrinsically atheistic then all scientists should inevitably be atheists, which is however not the case. Those of them who are atheists did not become so because they adopted correct scientific reasoning but because they were ignorant, mistaken and going beyond the limits of natural sciences.

And the second is about the problem of the governance of the world.³⁴ Şabrî summarizes the position of the opponent by saying that the universe is governed by the laws and that these laws evolved over a long period of time and that they have not been imposed from the outside but that they have stemmed from nature itself. Therefore, there is no need to have a divine being to govern the universe. Şabrî argues that these are mere conjectures in the name of experiment

³¹ See: "Controversy Respecting the Nature of the World" and "Controversy Respecting the Age of the Earth," in *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, pp. 152-181 and pp. 182-200 respectively.

³² See: "Conflict Respecting the Criterion of Truth", pp. 183-201.

³³ See: "Controversy Respecting the Age of the Earth", pp. 182-200. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 277.

³⁴ See: "Controversy Respecting the Government of the Universe" pp. 228-245. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 278.

and scientific reasoning. It is neither inferred from the experiment directly nor does it necessarily follow from rational reasoning based on it. Not to mention that it is out of science's boundaries to judge what is beyond material phenomena. He wonders at the situation of those who are not able to differentiate between experiment and rational argument attached to it. He says:

experiment points to the existence of laws; it does not point to something beyond that i.e. existence or non-existence, as argued by atheists who belong to materialism. However, reason —should not depart from experiment or else it would not point to what it points to— does not stop where experiment stops; thus, it necessitates the existence of something that is not denied by experiment [...].³⁵

Furthermore, Şabrî contends that holding the view that the universe is governed by mechanical laws does not necessitate an atheistic position. Newton, who is the founder of mechanistic view of universe, was a staunch believer and he did not find mechanistic description of the world a hindrance towards belief in God.³⁶ However, the Qur'ānic teaching that universe is governed by laws must have been the best proof for Şabrî to hold such a view.³⁷

In order to explain the nature of universe and the nature of its functioning, materialists often use the example of machine to prove that universe is self sufficient and that it does not need any hidden cause to move it from beyond. Şabrî explains that the usage of such examples to prove that the universe is run only by those laws is not appropriate because:

the watch which apparently moves automatically needs two movers: one is the immediate one who winds it up every twenty four hours, and the other is the distant one who makes it capable of moving in the first place. Furthermore, it needs the third one who invented it in the past.³⁸

³⁵ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 292.

³⁶ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 292.

³⁷ See: "And the sun runs its course for a period determined for it: that is the decree of (Him), the Exalted in Might, the All-Knowing. And the Moon, - We have measured for her mansions (to traverse) till she returns like the old (and withered) lower part of a date-stalk. It is not permitted to the Sun to catch up the Moon, nor can the Night outstrip the Day: Each (just) swims along in (its own) orbit (according to Law)". *Yasīn*, 38-40.

³⁸ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 294.

Accordingly, Şabrî observes that the machine which humans have made is a machine only in the third place according to the materialists themselves. Nature is the machine which produces the human as a machine which in turn produces a machine like a watch which is based on some principles and laws. So, to say that the universe is self governed by the laws as the machine made by the human is functional because of the laws is a disregard for the role of the human and the nature in the making of the machine. Similarly, talking about the universe as a set of laws and principles is a disregard the Creator who devised those laws and put them into function.³⁹

This takes Şabrî to classical antiquity where he recognizes two schools of thought regarding the natural laws. One promoted the view of Democritus while the other supported the view of Epicurus. Democritus believed that the laws were eternal while Epicurus position was that they were accidental. The significance of the difference according to Şabrî is that if natural laws are eternal the formation of the universe will never come about. However, if they are accidental that would be possible because Epicureans allow chance to produce a cause at a certain point of time and place and divert the ongoing process. Natural laws become stable only after the chances meet and agree. Since Şabrî opines that such a systematic set of laws that govern the universe could not have been the product of chance, he argues that Epicureans unknowingly attributed chance with the principal of Power, *al-Qudrah* and Will *al-Irādah* that only belong to the Creator. Hence he admits that their view is not different from the theologians of religions and *milliyîn*, which is a strange argument for Şabrî to make, because it is so unlikely that a chance maybe perceived as God.⁴⁰ Overall, Şabrî believes that the view which supposes the existence of the unseen mover is closer to the truth and more correct than the view that there is a motion without the mover.⁴¹

³⁹ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 293-294.

⁴⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 297.

⁴¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 293.

iii. Categorization of Relations between Religion and Science

What is the relation between religion and science in Şabrî's view then? This may be further highlighted by using Ion Barbour's module which broadly describes the relation between religion and science.⁴² His contribution represents the most recent and authoritative analysis of the opinions on the relation between religion and science in the West. These categories are Conflict, Independence, Dialogue and Integration.⁴³

Interestingly enough, Barbour, like Şabrî, thinks that it is impossible to talk about religion and science without analyzing certain philosophical assumptions. Therefore, the discussion about the relation between science and religion necessarily involves inquiry into theology and philosophy, especially epistemology and metaphysics.⁴⁴

a) Conflict

According to Barbour, the theory of conflict presupposes that the nature of the relation between religion and science is that of disagreement. It is best represented in the contrast between scientific materialism and biblical literalism; the former based on logic and sense data while the latter on the infallible scripture.⁴⁵ In Şabrî's view, scientific materialism does not only oppose scriptural literalism; it opposes the vital principles of religion such as the existence of God, the belief in prophets and miracles, and the possibility of resurrection. Şabrî does not discuss scriptural literalism in his work; he discusses the chief principles of faith as established by rational reasoning *vis-à-vis* science. If he would have dealt with scriptural literalism as it is understood in the West, he would have certainly criticized it in the first place because it is not capable of representing religion

⁴² Ian G. Barbour is Professor of Science, Technology, and Society at Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota. He is the author of *Myths, Models and Paradigms* (a National Book Award), *Issues in Science and Religion*, and *Science and Secularity*, all published by Harper San Francisco. This module is presented in his *Religion in an Age of Science* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990).

⁴³ See: *Religion in an Age of Science*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁵ See: *Ibid.*, p. 4.

correctly. On the other hand, the mistake of scientific materialism is epistemological i.e. it is based only on senses and reason attached to them. That produces incompatibility with religion which is detrimental to the nature of relation between religion and science. Essentially, this is how modernists approached religion. Şabrî argues therefore, that there is no compromise with scientific materialism. It is to be resisted, criticized and corrected. Furthermore, Şabrî agrees with Barbour that the boundaries of science are not properly observed and that materialists start with science but end up with broad philosophical claims.⁴⁶ In this way, Şabrî argues, materialists fall into self contradiction because their materialism, by definition, does not support such philosophical claims that go beyond materialism itself. Furthermore, Şabrî agrees with Barbour that science occupies a separate territory; but Şabrî does not believe that that territory necessarily contradicts the territory of religion. Rather, Şabrî sees those territories as complementing each other and as representing one reality.⁴⁷

b) Independence

Another way of looking at the relation between religion and science is that they are two watertight compartments; each one of them having its own autonomous domain and distinct mode of inquiry. Henceforth, they should not meddle in each other's affairs.⁴⁸ Şabrî, agrees that they are separate but simultaneously argues that science has implications for religion and religion has implications for science. True science cannot deny religion since it is based on healthy reasoning, the reasoning that supports religion. True religion does not contradict science; it even encourages it for purposes higher than material needs. Şabrî would agree with Barbour's view that such a position tries to avoid conflict and recognize two distinct areas of life and thought, but Şabrî would not be satisfied with it. He argues for an integrative and comprehensive unity of life,

⁴⁶ See: Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁷ See: Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁸ See: Ibid., p. 10.

thought and purpose; everything under the umbrella of reason which is intrinsically harmonious with religion.⁴⁹

c) Dialogue

The third view is that of dialogue. It presupposes a conflict between two areas⁵⁰ but Şabrî does not agree with that. Like Barbour, he recognizes that there are boundary issues and methodological problems between religion and science, but still, he argues that they must be synchronized by reason. The methods of science must be different because of the nature of its subject and similarly, the methods of theology must be different because of the nature of its subject. But this difference does not mean contradiction or opposition. Hence, Şabrî suggests the mediating role of reason which will comparatively look into the physical and metaphysical and strike a balance between them.

d) Integration

The fourth category is about the possibility of integration between religion and science.⁵¹ Şabrî would opt for that. In this category, science and religion do not take up results, methods and aims of any of them, but they i.e. science and religion are collectively taken up by a third party i.e. reason. This is an enfolding process which continuously updates and amends human understanding of reality which encompasses both material and immaterial realms. Consequently, since Şabrî believes that reason is in complete agreement with religion, a total integration of science and religion is also possible. Barbour, on the other hand believes that only a sort of integration is possible.⁵² To sum this up with Şabrî's own words:

there are sciences which support religion because they support the issue of God's existence, and there are sciences which are neutral because religion

⁴⁹ See: Ibid., p. 16.

⁵⁰ See: Ibid., pp. 16-23.

⁵¹ See: Ibid., p. 23.

⁵² See: Ibid., p. 29.

does not come under their study, and there is no science which opposes the foundation of religion and deny the existence of God.⁵³

All in all, Ṣabrī was able to recognise materialists and positivists' perceptions of science which were so popular in the West and even more popular in the East and to distinguish those perceptions from what science was supposed to be according to its methodology which was exposed by leading scientists of the West. Simultaneously, he criticized modern understanding of science and succeeded to expose its incongruity. In addition, he was able to integrate such *pure* science, liberated from certain philosophical interpretation into the traditional framework of *Kalām* opening the door for science into Islamic philosophy generally and the study of religion particularly. Subsequently, he revitalized the *Kalāmī* paradigm and showed its appropriateness in the face of modern challenges. In this way, he thrived in placing science and its methodology in such a perspective which did not oppose religion. However, being busy in responding to the onslaught of modernists on religion using science and their devaluation of reason, Ṣabrī focused on exposing weaknesses of science and strenghts of reason and religion. Perhaps, this struggle consumed all his energy leaving him with no motivation to focus a bit more on positive aspects of science and its constructive contribution in the study of religion in which he doubtlessly believed.

⁵³ *Ma'wqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 276.

PART III

Religion and Modernity: Issues and Challenges

Chapter I

The Existence of God

The issue of the existence of God is of crucial importance for conceptualization of religion and its justification in Şabrî's view. Religion can be valid only in case God exists. Since His existence has been disputed in modernity, Şabrî takes up the task of revising the classical proofs for the existence of God and their modern criticisms. This chapter will consider Şabrî's exposition of the contingency, causality, ontological, teleological and moral proofs for the existence of God.

i. The Contingency Proof

The heading under which the contingency proof is discussed in the books of *Kalām* is *Mas'alat ithbāt al-Wājib*.¹ Although originally a proof developed by the Islamic peripatetic philosophers like Abū Yūsuf Al-Kindī (c. 801-873), Abū Naşr Al-Farābī (870-950) and Abū 'Alī Ibn Sīnā (980-1037),² *Mutakallimūn* adopted it as their own and included it in their teaching manuals. It eventually turned out to be their standard argument for the existence of God for subsequent generations of Muslim theologians and scholars. In the Western intellectual heritage it has been formulated most prominently by Aquinas³ and Leibnitz.⁴ Şabrî has got a number of versions of this argument with more or less similar details spread all over his major book.⁵ One such version runs like this:

existent is of two types: existent whose existence is not necessary and whose existence may be detached from it. That is briefly known as contingent. This existent does not exist alone because it depends on an existent which is

¹ See: Al-Taftāzānī, "Fī 'l-Wujūd wa 'l-'Adam," in *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1998), v. 1, pp. 293-409. Al-Ījī, "Fī 'l-Wujūd wa 'l-'Adam," in *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, nd), pp. 43-59.

² See: "Fī 'l-Wujūd wa 'l-'Ālih," in *Al-Ishārāt wa 'l-Tanbihāt* with commentary of Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1983), v. 3, pp. 7-54.

³ See: "The Third Way," in *Summa Theologica* (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), p. 17.

⁴ See: *The Monadology and other Philosophical Writings*, translation, introduction and notes Robert Latta (London: Oxford University Press: 1925), pp. 274-280

⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 75.

prior to it and which gives it existence, and thus its [contingent] existence points to the existence of the existent which gives [existence]. Then, there is existent whose existence is necessary and whose existence cannot be detached from it. Accordingly, the first one comprises all contingencies other than God; which is referred to as the world, and which is possible not to exist and to exist as it actually does. Henceforth, no rational impossibility follows from supposing its non-existence as would follow from supposing the non-existence of the second existent that is the necessary being.⁶

The distinctiveness of this argument, in Şabrî's view, is that it proceeds from the necessity of being. No other being's existence is proved on the grounds of the necessity of its existence.⁷ He argues that the basic issue in this proof is not whether God exists or not; rather it is: can contingent existence exist on its own without being dependent on necessary existence.⁸ Unlike St. Aquinas who does not explain why this being should be called God, Şabrî opines that "God is the name denoting the being that necessarily exists".⁹

He painstakingly proceeds on highlighting each detail of the argument to prove that it is valid to suppose that the world, both in its particularity and entirety, could not have existed on its own in the first place. It is also valid to suppose that it may end at some time in the future.¹⁰ Contrary to what materialists think, to suppose world's existence or non-existence does not lead to any rational impossibility. *Dawām al-wujūd* or the continuity of existence, which the materialists emphasize, is not the necessary existence.¹¹ The continuity of existence allows the detachment of the attribute of existence *al-wujūd* from its essence or *al-māhiyyah* while it cannot be conceived of in regard to necessary being. Existence and non-existence are two equal possibilities in the case of the universe and if one is materialized in the presence of the other it must be for a cause *al-murajjih*. If that is assumed without a cause, it leads to inconsistency; because nothing can take place

⁶ Ibid., v. 2, p. 169.

⁷ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 165.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., v. 2, pp. 165-166.

¹⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 166-167.

¹¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 167-168.

without a cause. That cause must not be of the same contingent nature of the universe, because that cause would need another cause. It will also need a cause to overweigh one of the two possibilities i. e. existence and non-existence, over the other, or what is known as *tarjīḥ al-murajjih*. Therefore, necessary being does not need a cause for its existence.

Responding to the materialist atmosphere of modernity Ṣabrī argues that reason establishes the existence of a necessary being without requiring *seeing* it.¹² It is more existent than any other material being. Everything ultimately depends on it. Furthermore, according to him, seeing is a condition in proving the existence of contingent things, not in establishing the existence of the necessary being.¹³

As to the impossibility that results from supposing the non-existence of the necessary being in contrast to the non-existence of world, Ṣabrī reminds us that the necessary being is the cause for existence and if it did not exist, the non-existence of our universe would result, which is obviously not the case because the universe does exist.¹⁴

From Ṣabrī's exposition it is clear that in establishing necessary existence he heavily relied on certain rational concepts such as the concept of contradiction or *al-tanāquḍ*,¹⁵ impossibility or *al-muḥāl*,¹⁶ preferring without preference or *al-tarjīḥ biḡhayr al-murajjih*¹⁷ and causality or *al-illiyyah*¹⁸. Being aware that these concepts are not taken for granted in modern European thought or that they are

¹² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 169.

¹³ See: Ibid.

¹⁴ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 169-170.

¹⁵ For a short and comprehensive definition of these terms, see: Al-Jurjānī, "Al-Tanāquḍ," in *Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt* (Beirut: Maktabatu Lubnan, 1990), p. 70. Al-Tahānawī, "Al-Tanāquḍ," in *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-'Ulūm wa 'l-Funūn*, ed. Rafiq al-'Ajam (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1996), v. 1, pp. 513-516.

¹⁶ See: Al-Jurjānī, "Al-Muḥāl," in *Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt*, p. 217.

¹⁷ See: Al-Tahānawī, "Al-Tarjīḥ," in *Kashshāf*, v. 1, pp. 415-416. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī 'l-'Itiqād* (Damascus and Beirut: Dār Qutaybah, 2003), p. 42.

¹⁸ See: Al-Jurjānī, "Al-'illah," in *Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt*, pp. 159-160. Al-Tahānawī, "Al-tanāquḍ," in *Kashshāf*, v. 2, p. 1206-1215.

undervalued, he discusses the arguments of their opponents and tries to re-establish the validity and trust in this proof.¹⁹

Criticism of Contingency Proof and Ṣabrī's Response

Ṣabrī mentions that the contingency proof, including other rational proofs, has generally been disregarded by modernists, both in the East and the West, for lack of the so called empirical dimension. His attempt comes, therefore, to revitalize the proof and reaffirm its importance. One particular criticism of this proof on rational grounds comes from Pierre Leroux (1798-1871) who argues that the contingency of the universe is not granted because no part of it seems to be contingent except for the relations between some of its parts that we do not understand. If the reality of these relations is discovered it may be proved that the universe is necessary because of the necessity of the relation between cause and effect.²⁰ Ṣabrī's response is succinct and clear; the known and the unknown parts of the universe and its sum-total could have not existed on their own. Along with that, their causes and effects are attached and not treated in themselves. The relation between cause and effect is necessary, but the relation between contingent parts is also contingent. So, the world as a sum-total of parts and relations is contingent too.²¹

¹⁹ William Lane Craig acknowledges this European negligence of classical Islamic arguments for existence of God: "Probably no chapter in the history of the cosmological argument is as significant – or as universally ignored – as that of the Arabic theologians and philosophers. Although we find in them the origin and development of two of the most important versions of the cosmological argument, namely the argument from temporality and the argument from contingency, the contribution of these Islamic thinkers is virtually ignored in western anthologies and books on the subject". *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd. 1979).

²⁰ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 166-168, footnote 2. Ṣabrī takes a quotation from the journal of *Al-Azhar*, vol. 5, No. 16 which is also reproduced in Muḥammad Ghallāb, *Mushkilat al-Ulūbiyyah*, pp. 72-73. Ṣabrī finds it annoying that Ghallāb did not comment on this point.

²¹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 166-168, footnote 2.

ii. The Causation Proof (*Dalīl al-ʿIlīyyah*)

Ṣabrī holds that the causation way or what he calls *ṭarīq al-ʿilīyyah* is traditionally the most popular argument among the *Mutakallimūn*. He equates it with the cosmological proof or what he calls as *al-dalīl al-kayānī* in the West.²² That is, however, only partially true, because the first cause argument and the contingency proof together constitute the cosmological proof. He thinks that the *Kalāmī* argument is well presented in the theological and philosophical manuals, and that the cosmological proof is available in modern literature, so he attempts to present his own version in an innovative what he calls "middle way" that combines "the old style of *Kalām* and the modern Western style".²³

So, the first premise of this proof is that *there is change in the world*. Ṣabrī stresses that this premise is based on sense and observation and that it is justified and accepted both by old and positive modern science.²⁴ In explaining it he emphasizes following three points:

- 1) Sceptics deny the existence of the external world and deny any form of certainty. This philosophical trend has never been strong in Muslim thought, probably reminding modern Muslim thinkers of its importance in the West.²⁵
- 2) Modern quasi-sceptics, who are headed by Kant, conceive the world as existing in mind as impressions only; not in reality as hard facts.²⁶
- 3) Extreme Sufis who believe in *waḥdat al-wujūd* contend that all existence is one; that of God. But there is no real objection against this premise, because they do not deny the existence of world; they just annex it to divinity.²⁷

The second premise of causation proof is that *there must be a cause for that change*. For Ṣabrī, causation, which is the essence of this premise, does not rely in its entirety on senses and observation because it is an abstract concept. That,

²² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 170.

²³ See: Ibid.

²⁴ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 171.

²⁵ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 173.

²⁶ See: Ibid. For these two points, see: "Scepticism," in this dissertation and the coming sections of this Chapter.

²⁷ See: "Waḥdat al-Wujūd," in *Mawqif al-ʿAql*, v. 3, pp. 85-315.

however, does not make it weaker than the first premise; quite the contrary: it makes it stronger because acquiring knowledge from the first premise depends on trusting the second in the sense that knowing the principle of causality precedes the knowledge of a particular thing. Therefore, Şabrî concludes, doubting in the causation principle gives way to doubting in the existence of sensual things.²⁸

Şabrî continues to give many reasons to convince the materialists that the principle of causation is equally strong as the principle of sensual observation. He argues that the abstract and material arguments are not only on the same level but that abstract argument, such as causation, is stronger than material argument such as observation. What follows, however, is a summary of his reasoning:

- 1) The principle of causality is accepted by the reason of every man and that makes any discussion against it invalid.²⁹
- 2) Principles like causality are so close to us that we use them and we do not feel that they even exist, like the muscles which we use in walking as given by Le Ping.³⁰
- 3) The principle of causation is the ultimate way to know truth and without it, it would be impossible to know anything.³¹
- 4) As argued by Aristotle, first principles like causation need not to be proved and their certainty is stronger than certainty of any result derived from them.³²
- 5) All sciences are validated by the principles of causality because sciences are based on knowing the causes.³³
- 6) If the principle of causality is removed from man's mind, he would never look for causes and reasons.³⁴

Şabrî also argues that there is no disagreement among modern thinkers on the validity of first principles. However, ways in which they argue for them may

²⁸ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 171.

²⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 171.

³⁰ See: *Ibid.*

³¹ See: *Ibid.*

³² See: *Ibid.*

³³ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 172.

³⁴ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 172.

be categorized into three broad groups: (a) either they are absolutely innate or (b) innate for individual but acquired by kind or (b) acquired by individual only.³⁵ He holds that the first one is the most correct while the second is the weakest. From there he concludes that since theologians use the first one, their position is stronger than the position of materialists because they depend on the last view.³⁶

Şabrī obviously maintains that the first premise does not need additional justification. Therefore, when he presents the *Mutakallimūn*'s way of the causation argument, he immediately comes to discuss the second premise taking it for granted that the first premise does not need more validation. Indeed, according to him, our common experience of witnessing perpetual change in the world should not be a point of disagreement. Therefore, he reiterates, that the first premise is self-evident or *al-badīhī*:

every event must be contingent, not impossible; otherwise it would not have happened. It also must not be necessary for the necessary is not preceded by nothingness. The contingent is what does not require by itself to exist or not to exist. Existence and non-existence are the same for it. So, if it occurs, it occurs due to a cause so that preferring without preference does not happen; which is impossible, because it necessitates non equality of existence and non-existence in what they are supposed to be equal. The non-equality in what equality is supposed, necessarily leads to the contrary of the supposed which leads to a contradiction.³⁷

This is how Şabrī, in contrast to the Westerners' argument for the validity of the second premises, explains how *Mutakallimūn* would do it. He carries the task further by showing how to make sense of the *Mutakallimūn*'s way for the modern mind. He compares the *Mutakallimūn*'s preferring without preference or *tarjīh bighayr murajjih* with the Westerners' principle of causality. Both of them are rooted in the concept of contradiction or *al-tanāquḍ* which is common not only for the two intellectual traditions but also generally in human thought. In the case of causality, no event can take place without a cause, and to suppose the opposite inevitably leads to contradiction, while in the case of preferring without

³⁵ See: Ibid.

³⁶ See: Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., v. 2, pp. 172-173.

preference, one of the sides is preferred over the other without any cause of preference which is again contradiction because that cannot happen without causation. Although causality and contradiction are both from the first principles, Şabrî believes that contradiction is more obvious and thus supports his view by Kant's assertion that the first sign that an idea is true is that it is free from contradiction.³⁸ Moreover, he argues that the whole geometry is based on the possibility that cannot be contradicted. He also argues that all first principles that are used by the *Mutakallimūn* in the final stages of their argumentation such as *Luzūm Khilāf al-Mafrūd*, *Tahṣīl al-Hāṣil*, *al-Muṣādarah 'alā al-Maṭlūb*, *al-Tarjīḥ bilā Murajjih*, *al-Dawr*, *al-Tasalsul*, *Tawārud al-'illatayn 'alā ma'lūl wāḥid shakhṣī*, are rooted in the principles of contradiction.³⁹

Finally, Şabrî comes to a conclusion that is deducted from the two premises. If the cause is necessary then the necessary being is proved, the being to which theists refer to as God and philosophers as the Absolute. However, if the cause is contingent like the effect then it needs another cause for its existence. It needs the cause of the cause whereby the necessary being is proved in the second stage. If the causes go infinitely then impossibility will follow. In order to avoid it, a necessary cause must be supposed and thus the existence of God may be established.⁴⁰

Summing up the discussion on premises, Şabrî reasserts that they are based on certainty although that certainty is based on different foundations. Some of it is sensual, the other self-evident while the third is arrived at by deduction. The lowest in the grade of certainty is that based on senses. If premises are certain, results are also certain. The result will always go with the lowest grade of certainty that one of the premises contains. Obviously, he stresses the importance of the second premise because that is been objected to by materialists for its non-material essence. Thus, he compares between old and new ways and makes sense of them, proving that old disciplines have got their role to play in modern currents of thought.

³⁸ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 173.

³⁹ See: Ibid.

⁴⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 174.

Ṣabrī's Criticism of Objections against the Causality Proof

a) Objection against Moving from Contingent to Necessary

The first objection that Ṣabrī mentions is that the causality argument moves from the contingent to the necessary i.e. from the contingent world to the necessary being.⁴¹ The centre of this objection is that whatever is deduced from what is based on the contingent cannot prove anything except what is within the limits of the contingent itself; not outside it i.e. the ultimate ground for its existence or the necessary being. The gist of his response is that when the contingent becomes materialized in reality, it becomes a necessary existence and therefore, a valid reference to start with, and to infer from, the existence of the necessary being. Furthermore, it reaffirms the contingency of the world in the sense that it needs to depend on something else for its existence. In addition, he simply disregards the view of those who discard the self-evident proof of senses that the world exists. As to the sceptical supposition that the world does not exist, Ṣabrī replies that he does not hide that his proof for the existence of God is founded on the fact of the existence of the world. However, trying to make as much sense as possible from the position of sceptics, Ṣabrī argues that even the hypothesis "if the world exists" then "God exists too" is enough to prove the existence of God.⁴²

b) Objection against Infinity of Contingent Causes

Second objection is that the contingent causes may go infinitely without actually ending with the necessary cause.⁴³ This objection threatens the validity of the causal argument. It is a classical issue and it has been treated in the manuals of the *Mutakallimūn* and *Falāsifah*⁴⁴ and their two major contra arguments were

⁴¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 177.

⁴² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 177.

⁴³ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 178.

⁴⁴ Ṣabrī quotes Aristotle, Ibn Sīnā and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shirāzī, Ibid., v. 2, pp. 178-179.

burhān al-taṭbiq and *burhān al-taḍāyuf*⁴⁵ but Ṣabrī finds them too “boring” and does not expect them to appeal to a modern reader, or even worse, he doubts that these contra arguments can establish the existence of the necessary being.⁴⁶ He thinks that indefinite regress of contingent causes in the past is simpler than it is presented in these writings. He expresses his wonder as to why this issue has been debated in such a complicated manner.⁴⁷ He, therefore, attempts to offer a complementary criticism of indefinite regress of contingent causes in a simpler and easier way.⁴⁸ This is also a good example of Ṣabrī’s sound attitude towards traditional Islamic theology and philosophy.

In his novel explanation, Ṣabrī argues that increasing the number of contingent causes does not simplify the matter or solve the problem. Rather, it further complicates the whole issue by increasing the number of contingent causes and, therefore, increasing dependence or *al-ḥājah* of the world on the necessary cause. Supposing soo many causes is a mere imagination or *al-khayāl*. Their existence is not materialized or *ghayr mutaḥaqqaq*. Even as something imaginative, it is dependent or *mu‘allaq* on the existence of previous causes, and if these causes did not exist in the first place nothing would have existed now in our reality.⁴⁹

In order to explain his position further, Ṣabrī gives the following examples:

1) He supposes a chain of ten causes in which the tenth is depending on the ninth and the ninth on the eight and so on until cause number one. Cause number one may exist only if it has a cause for its existence otherwise it cannot, because it is not a necessary cause. So, if cause number one does not exist, cause number two ceases to exist because it depends on cause number one and this goes on until we reach cause number ten which will, naturally, not exist as well. As a result, this kind of chain cannot exist in reality. It can only exist in imagination. This example may be

⁴⁵ For explanation of these two and five more arguments against *al-tasalsul*, see: Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, v. 2, pp. 114-131.

⁴⁶ See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 2, p. 179.

⁴⁷ See: Ibid.

⁴⁸ A similar argumentation is presented in Ṣabrī’s *Dīnī Mujaddidler* (İstanbul: Sebīl Yayınevi, 1994 [1919]), pp. 226-238. See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 2, p. 181.

⁴⁹ See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 2, pp. 182, 184.

applied on any number no matter how big it is; it only increases the need for the existence of a cause that does not need a cause for its existence.⁵⁰

2) The example of infinite causes is equal to adding zero on the left side of any number from one to nine. No matter how many zeros are added on the left of a number they will never acquire any numerical value until one of the numbers from one to nine is added in front of zero.⁵¹

3) Similarly, borrowing a borrowed pound leads to the question about its source, because it could not have been borrowed always; it must have had some value; like to have been earned or inherited.⁵²

4) The last example he gives is that of a chain of men in which each man is supported by the back of the other and if the last man does not have any support, like a wall, the whole chain will collapse, which basically means that the whole chain of men could not have existed in the first place in reality.⁵³

The point which Şabrî wants to prove through these examples is that the chain of contingent causes cannot exist in reality without being supported by a cause that is not of the same nature as other contingent causes. In other words, the sum of contingent causes on which the world is supposed to rest is contingent like the world itself and it needs to rest on a cause that is of a different nature i.e. the necessary cause. Finally, in the case of infinity, Şabrî argues that contingent causes cannot constitute an infinite chain of causes because contingent by its nature is limited and, resultantly, a chain of contingent causes must be limited too.⁵⁴

c) Kant's Criticism

Examining Kant's criticism of the rational arguments for the existence of God, Şabrî proudly declares that the objection of un-terminated regress of infinite causes, which is one of Kant's criticisms in the West and Muḥammad 'Abduh's in

⁵⁰ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 183-184.

⁵¹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 184-185.

⁵² See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 184-186.

⁵³ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 186-189.

⁵⁴ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 189-190.

the East, is proved invalid.⁵⁵ In addition to the classic argumentation and his own complementary remarks, Şabrî also brings Charles Bernard Renouvier's (1815-1903) criticism of Kant to prove that even among Western scholars there are intellectuals who hold an identical view as himself and the classical Islamic thought.⁵⁶

Şabrî also examines Kant's criticism of the premise that "everything *ḥādith* has its cause" which discredits the principle of causality and its value in metaphysics.⁵⁷ Şabrî acknowledges that if this criticism is correct then the whole proof for the existence of God can be proved wrong.⁵⁸ However, Şabrî holds that this criticism has no validation and that it is made only to discredit the rational proof for the existence of God. Otherwise, it does not have relevance in human thought. As a proof for that, Şabrî argues that no thinker has ever questioned the principle of causality and that even the majority of thinkers in the West, especially Renouvier, do not agree with Kant.

In order to remove the ambiguity in Kant's criticism, Şabrî tries the following:

a) According to Kant, the principle of causality works only in physics⁵⁹ and this is, in Şabrî's view, what the proof for existence of God is taking note of; there is nothing in the physical world that has no cause. Then, the cause is also material and it needs another cause to make it come into existence. This continues until the necessary cause is reached or it continues infinitely which is in Şabrî's view of course wrong.

⁵⁵ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 170.

⁵⁶ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 178.

⁵⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 205. Kant says: "Everything that is contingent must have a cause a principle without significance, except in the sensuous world. For the purely intellectual conception of the contingent cannot produce any synthetical proposition, like that of causality, which is itself without significance or distinguishing characteristic except in the phenomenal world. But in the present case it is employed to help us beyond the limits of its sphere." *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. M. (London: G. Bell & Sons, New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1787), p. 374.

⁵⁸ See: *Ma'wqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 206.

⁵⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 206.

b) On the other side, Kant's criticism may be that the first cause is outside the material world, so, the principle of causality does not apply to it. But the problem is —according to Şabrî— that material causes would not have existed in the first place if there was no first immaterial cause. So, if material causes have no causes then the principle of causality does not work in the material world either. This is a contradiction, and therefore something wrong and unacceptable.

c) Another odd criticism that Şabrî does not approve and even opines that it damages Kant's great stature in philosophy is that rational proof does not establish the absolute necessity of the being; it only establishes what may be the cause of the world's existence according to the total of existing things or matter.⁶⁰ Recalling so many previous points and reaffirming their validity, Şabrî argues that there is no use of establishing such necessary cause that will not be able to provide existence to matter prior to its arrangement and organization.⁶¹

The summary of Şabrî's various responses is that there is nothing that specifies the principle of causality for physics only and excludes it from metaphysics, and that the existence of the world without a cause which is necessarily different from it in nature inevitably leads to a contradiction and hence to an incorrect position.

iii. Ontological Argument (*al-Dalîl al-Wujūdî*)

Ontological argument is translated in modern Arabic as the proof from existence *al-dalîl al-wujūdî* or as ontological argument or *al-dalîl al-anṭulūjî*. Şabrî reviews its history and tell us that it was formulated by St. Anselm (d. 1109) in the European Middle Ages, taken over by Descartes, and "rightfully criticized" in modern times by Kant.⁶² In the Muslim world, the ontological argument was well

⁶⁰ In Kant's words: "But if all that we perceive must be regarded as conditionally necessary, it is impossible that anything which is empirically given should be absolutely necessary." *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 379.

⁶¹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 210-211.

⁶² Majid Fakhry argues about the possibility that the ontological argument originated in Islamic intellectual tradition, see: "The Ontological Argument in the Arabic Tradition: The Case of al-Fārābī," in *Studia Islamica*, No. 64. (1986), pp. 5-17. Ontological argument has been criticized by

received by two prominent thinkers, 'Uthmān Amīn⁶³ and Maḥmūd al-'Abbās al-'Aqqād⁶⁴ but Ṣabrī was not satisfied with their uncritical attitude towards it and hoped that his criticism would change their views.⁶⁵ St. Anselm's famous wordings of the proof "that than nothing greater can be conceived"⁶⁶ is mentioned nowhere in Ṣabrī's writings, but whatever he wrote about the argument indicates that he was well aware of it. The ontological proof that Ṣabrī seems to have in his mind is the one formulated by Descartes who made explicit what was implicit in Anselm's argument i.e. that existence is an attribute that is better to have than not to have.

The specificity of the ontological argument as compared to other arguments in general and *Kalāmī* tradition in particular is that it does not proceed from the world to its creator, but from the idea of God to the reality of God. Ṣabrī appreciates this attempt on the part of Descartes but treats the argument itself very critically. He openly expresses his reservations and even mentions the sarcastic criticism against the argument that imagining having ten pounds does not really make you having them.⁶⁷ He agrees with the argument that "ultimate perfection cannot be conceived of without the existence of the most perfect being", but conceiving perfection and existence as inseparable in the mind does not necessitate their actual existence in reality outside the mind.⁶⁸ In other words, proving the existence of the most perfect being is a precondition to its conception as a being that has all the perfect attributes. For those who believe in the existence of God, he is naturally the most perfect being because His existence is established through

many including: Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel, J. A. Dörner, Lotze and Robert Flint. For relevant excerpts from their writings, see the introduction of: *Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix on Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo; and Cur Deus Homo* trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago: The Open Court, 1903), pp. iii-xxvi.

⁶³ See: *Dikārt*, p. 143.

⁶⁴ See: *Allāh in Mawsū'at Maḥmūd al-'Abbās Al-'Aqqād al-Islāmiyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1970), v. 1, pp. 247-249.

⁶⁵ See; *Marwqif al-'Aql* v. 2, p. 224.

⁶⁶ See: St. Anselm, "Chapter II," in *Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix on Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo; and Cur Deus Homo*, p. 7.

⁶⁷ See; *Marwqif al-'Aql* v. 2, p. 225.

⁶⁸ Ibid., v. 2, p. 225. For an English translation of Ṣabrī's argumentation see: Mehmet Kadri Karabela. *One of the Last Ottoman Shaykhulislams, Mustafa Sabri Effendi (1869-1954): His Life, Works and Intellectual Contributions*. M.A. Thesis. (Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 2003), pp. 86-8. However, I rely on my own translation.

other arguments, while for those whose existence is disputable there is no meaning in describing something of which existence is not established to be described as the most perfect being. Şabrî sums up his criticism drawing attention to three important logical principles that this argument implies:

The first is the stipulation that the subject must exist as a condition for the truth of affirmative propositions while the stipulation does not hold with respect to the truth of negative propositions. Second, lifting any limitation on what mind can conceive above and beyond what can actually be affirmed to be true. Third, considering the definitions they refer to as explanatory statements as being among those conceptions which are limitless as compared to that which can actually be affirmed as true even if they take the form of propositions.⁶⁹

Finally, Şabrî suggests the second point is a cause of mistake for the supporters of ontological proof while the first one, if taken seriously, may open their eyes.⁷⁰

Kant's criticism of the ontological proof in the modern times is most famous.⁷¹ Şabrî presents it in the following way:⁷²

If the proposition that "God exists" is analytical then its predicate does not add anything new to its subject. Rather it is a mere repetition. So, to establish an argument in favour of such a proposition yields no benefit. If [proposition] is synthetic then there is no impossibility in denying the predicate to the subject because of no implication of contradiction; for contradiction is implied only if predicate is negated from the subject in the analytical propositions.⁷³

In Şabrî's view, this objection is raised against the contention or *al-da'wā* that God exists rather than against the proof for his existence.⁷⁴ He admits that there is some strangeness in the ontological proof, and the fact that it is accepted among prominent thinkers in the East and the West. Although he himself

⁶⁹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2 p. 228, footnote no. 1. Cf. Karabela's translation, p. 88.

⁷⁰ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2 p. 228.

⁷¹ See: Chapter III: "The Ideal of Pure Reason," Section: "On the Impossibility of an Ontological Proof of the Existence of God," in *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 364-369.

⁷² See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 208-210.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 208.

⁷⁴ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 208.

criticized the ontological argument, he criticizes Kant's criticism of it because, in his view, it touches upon the basic contention that God exists. Furthermore, he opines that if Kant's criticism is correct, that will lead to the impossibility of proving any proposition, not just the proposition that God exists. Agreeing with Kant that there is no contradiction implied in denying the predicate of existence to God directly, yet, Şabrî argues that it indirectly implies contradiction because the world would have to be without *murajjih* in one or without *al-'illah* in the other instance.⁷⁵

Şabrî agrees with the contemporary defenders of the ontological argument like Norman Malcolm (1911-1990),⁷⁶ Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000)⁷⁷ and Alvin Plantinga (b. 1932)⁷⁸ that a being that necessarily exists cannot coherently be thought not to exist, but he also contends that the necessity cannot be proved by this argument. It must be proved by other arguments.⁷⁹ The critics of these defenders of the ontological proof often argue that they failed to observe the distinction between the logical and ontological and Şabrî seems to agree with them. In fact, he disregards the ontological argument on both logical and ontological grounds as has been shown. However, he appreciates argument only for those who already believe in the existence of God. He appreciates it also for being suggested by the father of modern Western thought i.e. Descartes which is a fact that he utilizes to criticize materialists, positivists and Eastern modernists who stood against rational arguments for religion and who propagated modernity as an exclusively atheistic enterprise.

⁷⁵ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 209-210.

⁷⁶ See his article: "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 69, No. 1. (Jan., 1960), pp. 41-62.

⁷⁷ See two of his articles: "The Logic of the Ontological Argument," in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 58, No. 17. (Aug. 17, 1961), pp. 471-473 and "The Formal Validity and Real Significance of the Ontological Argument," in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3. (May, 1944), pp. 225-245.

⁷⁸ See his article: "A Valid Ontological Proof?" in *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 70, No. 1. (Jan. 1961) pp. 93-101. "Kant's Objection to the Ontological Argument," in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 63, No. 19, American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Sixty-Third Annual Meeting. (Oct. 13, 1966), pp. 537-546.

⁷⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 209-210.

iv. Teleological Proof for the Existence of God (*Dalīl al-ʿillah al-Ghāʾiyyah*)

Ṣabrī identifies the teleological proof or *dalīl al-ʿillah al-ghāʾiyyah* with what *Mutakallimūn* call as the proof of wisdom *dalīl al-ḥikmah* or the design proof i.e. *dalīl al-niẓām*. But, he points to the essential difference in the usage of this proof between the two traditions; whereas the Westerners use it to prove the existence of God, the *Mutakallimūn* use it to prove the attributes of God only, not His existence.⁸⁰ However, Ṣabrī does not find any “obstacle” to use this proof as the Westerners use it⁸¹ recognizing the realities of the modern intellectual discourse, and showing flexibility in adjusting to the dominant trends and endeavouring to contribute to them positively. It is obvious that in a strictly *Kalāmī* environment he would have not embarked on such a step. But the challenges of modernity made him revisit the old arguments in nascent way and new light.

Ṣabrī renders the teleological proof in the following words:

In the structure of the parts of the universe and the constitution of these parts we observe general and particular conformities. Similarly, in the compliance of beings to the stages of existence we observe systems. These conformities and compliances evidently prove that the universe is built on the basis of knowledge and will; not on the basis of blind chance.⁸²

Ṣabrī compares the clarity of teleological proof with the clarity of Descartes’ *cogito*. So, if the *cogito* may be accepted as “an example for clarity” then, the teleological proof must be accepted for its clarity as well. However, in so far as the strength of argument is concerned, he considers the teleological proof as much stronger than Descartes’ *cogito*.⁸³ Ṣabrī places the discussion on the teleological proof for the existence of God in the perspective that he outlined while

⁸⁰ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 343-344.

⁸¹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 343.

⁸² *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 343. For a summary of how the modern theist present their argument see p. 73. Compare it with St. Augustine’s argument: “We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore, some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God”.

⁸³ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 443.

determining the nature of relation between religion and reason and religion and science. The teleological proof as such is not therefore obligatory for establishing the existence of God because the existence of God is already established by other rational arguments. The function of stating the teleological argument is not because rational argument is insufficient, but it is: (a) to increase the faith of those who believe in the veracity of the rational proofs, (b) to soften the hearts of those who deny the existence of God, and (c) to increase the feeling of debacle for those who persist in their denial.⁸⁴ Since rational arguments are self-sufficient and since they do not need to rely on empirical proofs, Şabrî obviously puts the teleological proof that is based on observation of the nature in an inferior position.⁸⁵ Paradoxically, he says that "the Qur'ân emphasizes this proof more than any other, so much so that it may be referred to as the *Qur'ānic proof*."⁸⁶ It appears that he ends up saying that the Qur'ân prefers to use an inferior scientific proof in the presence of a superior rational proof, which is incogruent with Şabrî's general argument that faith is based on reason rather than senses.

a) Şabrî's Analysis of the Elements of Teleological Argument

In order to remove misunderstanding and confusion that may be related to the teleological argument, Şabrî analyses it step by step. In each step he provides a reasonable discussion and criticism. The first point he raises is about knowledge and will that are inferred from the system in the universe. He argues that both knowledge and will cannot be explained in materialistic terms: "there is no relation or *munāsabah* between matter *al-māddah* and perception *al-idrāk*".⁸⁷ The explanation he offers is that knowledge and will in the human realm belong to the metaphysical, and not material sphere. Therefore, knowledge and the that are manifested in the harmony of the universe cannot be a product of mere material processes as suggested by materialists.

⁸⁴ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 342.

⁸⁵ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 342.

⁸⁶ See: The Qur'ân, *Ibrāhīm*, 32-34; Old Testament, Psalms 19:1; New Testament, Romans 1:19-21

⁸⁷ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 344-345.

Secondly, the naturalists claim that if knowledge and will are not a product of matter then they are certainly a product of nature. Şabrî opines that it is not acceptable to say that "matter does this and does that" so instead they created a concept of nature to say that it does this or that. What it actually means is that these works or *al-af'āl* do not have their originator or *al-fā'il*. Moreover, knowledge and will are not among the properties of matter. Hence, nature is a shallow concept or *ism bilā musammā* and it is not acceptable by the nature of human understanding *fiṭrat al-'uqūl*.⁸⁸

Thirdly, it may be argued that knowledge may not be a property of the parts of the universe or *ajzā' al-'ālam* but may be a property of the aggregate of the universe or *al-majmū' al-murakkab* because of the possibility that the whole or *al-kull* may have a property that one of its particulars or *al-juz'* may not have. He dismisses it on the ground of circularity in the argument or *al-dawr* simply because in that case "it implies that the existence of a whole system must have preceded the existence of its constitutive parts which is an impossibility or *al-muḥāl*".⁸⁹

Fourthly, the only possibility that materialists may resort to is to claim that the harmony in the universe is a product of chance. The falsity of this argument is so obvious to Şabrî because "they tend to insist on proving it so much while it takes almost no effort to prove it incorrect".⁹⁰ To support his view further, Şabrî quotes Western scholars such as Francois Fenelon (1651-1715), Montesquieu and Henri Poincare on this issue.⁹¹

b) Şabrî's Analysis of William Paley's Example of Watch

William Paley's (1743-1805) example of teleological proof has perhaps been the most successful one in modern Western thought. It runs as follows:

in crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there; I might possibly answer, that, for

⁸⁸ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 345-346.

⁸⁹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 346.

⁹⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 345-346.

⁹¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 346, footnote, 1.

any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever... But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground... I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given, that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone?... For this reason... that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what we could not discover in the stone) that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e. g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day [etc.]... This mechanism being observed... the inference, we think, is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker...⁹²

Given the importance of this argument and its popular appeal both in the East and the West, it is interesting to see how Şabrî analyses it:

who observes inside a faultlessly made watch which works and points to time which passes by during nights and days does not doubt in the existence of an intelligent craftsman who made it. It follows that who observes things that are hundreds of thousands of times more precise than thousands of watches that are present outside the human [mind] and inside the human [mind] like the red and white blood cells, should not doubt in the existence of a maker about whom it is modest to say that he is greater than a watchmaker because he is the maker of the watchmaker and the maker of his brain by which he made the watch, and he is the creator of both of them while the watchmaker did not create any of them. Thus, it follows that there should be no doubt in the existence of such a maker more than in the existence of that [watch] maker. This is more obvious with regard to the difference of necessary knowledge required to make a watch and to make a maker of the watch and his brain by which he made the watch. Because it is more impossible that the watchmaker and his brain are self-made than that the watch was self-made. No confusion remains after this in the existence of the greatest maker, after prolonged observation of man throughout the ages and of the universe throughout the history of science which point to his excellent structure. So, if it is not possible to imagine that the watch was self-made without a maker, how it is possible that the watchmaker was self-made without a maker because it is a thousand times easier to make a watch than to make a watchmaker. It is not correct to say that certainty of the existence of the watchmaker results from seeing a human making the watch or seeing a watch factory because there is no logical consistency between seeing someone making a watch or a factory and not seeing someone making that watch or a factory. What has made him certain is that the made

⁹² *Natural Theology: or, the Evidences of the Existence and Attribute of the Deity, Collected From the Appearances of Nature* (New York: Evert Duyckinck, 1820), p. 2.

thing could not have been made without a maker. His previous observation of someone making a watch only helps him to identify the kind of a maker whose existence is necessary for the existence of the watch. So, let the non-seeing of the maker of the watchmaker prevent knowing his kind and identity because it is anyhow not required to know it because the necessity of his being will identify him.⁹³

d) Ṣabrī's Analysis of Al-'Aqqād's View on Newton's and Leibnitz's Positions on Teleological Proof

Ṣabrī bases his account of Newton's and Leibnitz's positions on teleological proof on Al-'Aqqād's presentation, comments and remarks.⁹⁴ The gist of Newton's criticism according to Al-'Aqqād seems to be that the universe should not be described as perfect in order to infer from it the existence of creator. Such argument is flawed by contradiction or *al-tanāquḍ* which is that such perfect universe is self-sustainable by its laws and thus it can dispense with the care of God after its creation. The belief in God is based on conviction that God encompasses the whole creation with constant care, so the existence of any imperfection in the universe does not negate the existence of God. Rather, the existence of the Wise Creator presupposes creation of the universe which never achieves complete perfection so that it constantly requires the care and existence of its Creator.⁹⁵ Leibnitz, on the other hand, mocks at Newton's universe which, like a watch, needs to be repaired from time to time and hence, as an alternative, advocates the idea that this is the best possible universe.⁹⁶ Al-'Aqqād argues that the problem of teleological proof is great and that it may accommodate the views of both thinkers. Hence, no matter how perfect is Leibnitz's universe, it is still contingent; not a necessary being, while Newton's objection must be supplemented by the view of other thinkers who argue that creation is a process rather than an instantaneous isolated act.⁹⁷

⁹³ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 445-447.

⁹⁴ See: *Allāh*, p. 199. *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 434.

⁹⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 434.

⁹⁶ See: *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, pp. 343-345.

In a constructive manner, Şabrî argues that although Al-'Aqqād claims to harmonize these two views in the beginning, he tends to prefer Leibnitz's formulation in the end. It is unlikely that Newton claims that a perfect universe is equal to the necessary being. Accordingly, it is sufficient to claim that it is flawless and that it does not need constant care. In that sense, Newton's universe is like a perfect building that will continue to exist after the death of its constructor. However, the comparison between God and universe *vis à vis* constructor and building is unfit. For Şabrî, the constructor is not considered the creator of his construction and its complete cause on which its existence and continuance depend. He himself is created and his *af'āl* by which he constructs are created too, or the better part of them to be more exact. And in the sustenance of the building there is a smaller role for the constructor and a much bigger role for God who "sustains the heavens and earth"⁹⁸. So the building will not collapse; it will remain by God's will that brought it into existence and that keeps it surviving. To support his view further, Şabrî quotes Descartes' idea that creation is both origination of something that did not exist before and supporting it.⁹⁹

e) Spinoza's Criticism of the Teleological Proof

Şabrî mentions two problems raised by Spinoza; one is that this proof gives to the later or *al-mu'akkhar* the right of previous or *al-muqaddam*. The second is that the supporters of teleological proof tend to make the caused or *al-ma'lūl* more perfect than the cause or *al-'illah*.¹⁰⁰ Drawing on Hamdî Yazır's response, Şabrî asserts that Spinoza's criticism is invalid because he would have to deny the final

⁹⁸ *Al-Fāṭir*, 41.

⁹⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 435-436

¹⁰⁰ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 440. Cf. "Spinoza refutes the doctrine of final causes, which is connected with that of the divine freedom. He finds in this doctrine two grave errors: First, that of giving priority to what is posterior, of regarding, for example, vision as the cause of the eye, whereas it is in reality its effect; Second, that of reversing the order of perfection: for the cause is in itself more perfect, being nearer to God, whereas the upholders of final causes regard the effect as more perfect than the cause." Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles, *A History of the Problems of Philosophy*, trans. Ada Monahan, ed. Henry Jones (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1902), v. 2, p. 322.

causes not only in the case of God, but also in everything else including his own discussion of the teleological proof. That is, of course, absurd. Secondly, according to Muslim philosophers, and Ṣabrī chiefly means *Mutakallimūn*, the final cause is not the cause for the action *'illat al-fi'l*; it is the cause for the action of the actor or *'illat fā'iliyyat al-fā'il*. Hence, it precedes it in perception and comes after it in existence.¹⁰¹

f) Kant's Criticism of the Teleological Proof

After summarizing Kant's presentation of the teleological proof, Ṣabrī takes up his criticism of the teleological proof particularly, reminding us that Kant criticized all the proofs for the existence of God.¹⁰² There are three major points:

The first is that the teleological proof "proves the contingency of the form of the universe or *imkān ṣūrat al-'ālam*; not the contingency of matter or *imkān al-māddah*, and thus establishes the existence of the Maker or *al-Ṣāni'*; not the existence of the Creator or *al-Khāliq*".¹⁰³ Ṣabrī dismisses this objection by asserting that form is inseparable from matter and that they do not exist separately, so, whatever is the cause for one of them is the cause for the other.¹⁰⁴

The second point that Kant raises is that "the system in the universe points to the existence of a wise designer to the extent of the presence of wisdom in the system; not to the absolute wise designer. Or to put it in clearer words: it points to the existence of a wise designer only in the sense that he is the designer of the universe; not to the point that he is God".¹⁰⁵ Ṣabrī's response is blunt; if the designer of "mosquito's wings" and "solar systems" is not the absolute God then who would it be?¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 440-441.

¹⁰² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 437. Cf. Section 6: Of the Impossibility of the Physico-Theological Proof, Chapter III: "The Ideal of Pure Reason", in *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 381-386.

¹⁰³ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 437. Cf. Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles, *A History of the Problems of Philosophy*, v. 2, p. 304.

¹⁰⁴ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 437.

¹⁰⁵ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 437. Cf. Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles, *A History of the Problems of Philosophy*, v. 2, p. 304.

¹⁰⁶ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 437.

In relation to Kant's position, Ṣabrī mentions the idea of the possibility of the other world that is better than this one. It is allegedly proposed by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī who suggested that there is "no flaw in God's generosity and no imperfection in His power".¹⁰⁷ The basis for this position may be found in numerous Qur'ānic verses.¹⁰⁸ What fortifies this objection even more is the *Mutakallimūn's* use of teleological argument to establish God's attributes, not His existence. However, Ṣabrī's answer is realistic and sober; the system in the present universe is not below the standard. It requires that its designer should be God.¹⁰⁹ In accordance with this argumentation, he rejects Leibnitz proposition that no better world than this is possible or *laysa fi 'l-imkān abda' mim mā kān*.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, Ṣabrī adds that the design proof points to the existence of the necessary being in a clearer way. It starts from observable harmony in the universe, not from the abstract idea of existence as in ontological proof. Materialists claim the eternity of matter, but they do not claim the eternity of design because they suppose that it was formed by chance. Design is also not necessarily inherent in matter or nature because, according to them, it comes into being through chance. So is the case with the objection that another world which is better than this is possible although he does not hold the idea of chance. The present design and the possible better design both need a cause, and that cause must be a necessary being in order to avoid the infinite chain of causes. The necessary being is a source of all perfections, so, God is the absolute and no one resembles Him in wisdom and power.¹¹¹

Kant's third objection which Ṣabrī mentions is that the universe contains things of which rationale or wisdom is unknown.¹¹² He holds that if there is

¹⁰⁷ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 437-438.

¹⁰⁸ Such as: "If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people" *Al-Māi'dah*, 40. "If thy Lord had so planned, they would not have done it" *Al-An'ām*, 112. "If We had so willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance" *Al-Sajdah*, 13.

¹⁰⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 437-438.

¹¹⁰ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 437.

¹¹¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 438.

¹¹² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 440. Cf. Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles, *A History of the Problems of Philosophy*, v. 2, p. 304.

wisdom in the existence of certain things we would have known it. In response, Şabrî argues that our ignorance of wisdom does not deny the existence of that wisdom.

Comparing between the contingency and teleology proofs, Şabrî asserts in agreement with Kant, that teleological proof points to the existence of God based on contingency, because the system that we observe in the universe is also contingent. From here, the cause of the system of the universe must be necessary in order to avoid the chain of infinite causes or *al-tasalsul*. Thus, it follows that the necessary being can be no other than God. However, Şabrî does not miss to mention that Kant, in spite of his criticism of the teleological proof, still holds that it is the best, oldest, clearest and most appropriate of the proofs.¹¹³

g) Criticism Regarding the Existence of Evil

Şabrî quotes Al-'Aqqād who opines that one of the strongest criticisms against the teleological proof in the West is the existence of evil in the universe. In Al-'Aqqād's words: "if the universe is deliberately made into a harmonious whole then it means that the existence of evil is willfully intended; so does it agree with the Wisdom of the Wise?"¹¹⁴ Şabrî responds that this criticism does not appropriately fit against the teleological argument because the essence of the argument is to prove the existence of purpose and intention in the system of the universe irrespective of whether that falls in the category of good or evil. Furthermore, from the theological point of view in Islam, with the exception of the *Mu'tazilah*, God wills or *yurid* both of them, but does not accept or *la yardā* evil.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 461-463.

¹¹⁴ See: *Allāh*, p. 223. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 436.

¹¹⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 436.

h) Other Clarifications

One of the major problems which does not allow the Western scientists and theologians to accept the teleological argument is a scientific argument; that a scientific argument should make God visible and observable to everyone. However, Şabrî reminds all that this was not the issue in the first place. The issue was rather the existence of God; not seeing God.¹¹⁶ He contends that teleological proof fulfills all the requirements to establish the existence of God, which is of course, the bone of contention between theists, atheists and agnostics.

In continuation of that, another obstacle, which creates a lot of confusion for the Westerners, is that they confuse between establishing the existence of God and completely knowing His nature.¹¹⁷ By not knowing everything about God and His nature, they tend to deny His existence. They resemble Mose's Pharaoh who wanted "to build a lofty palace that he may mount up to the God of Moses".¹¹⁸ So like H. Spencer, they know that there is something beyond the nature that he refers to as the "unknown" and because he does not know it, he feels that he does not have enough evidence to prove its existence.¹¹⁹ But again, Şabrî argues that the first and foremost task is to look into the existence of God; not to know His essence and reality. His essence and reality are beyond human comprehension. In a somewhat polemical tone, Şabri argues that scientists have not been able to determine the essence of matter even, but that does not make them to deny its existence. So, if they cannot determine the essence of God they should not deny His existence. For him, therefore, "we are like Spencer; we do not know its essence but we know that it exists"[...], we call it God".¹²⁰

Şabrî does not appeal to the traditional authorities of Islamic intellectual heritage. He works within the Islamic framework but daringly charts his own map within it. He discusses the Western authorities and after arriving at his own

¹¹⁶ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 443, 445.

¹¹⁷ See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 445.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., v. 2, p. 445. *Al-Qaṣaṣ*, 38.

¹¹⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 448.

¹²⁰ Ibid., v. 2, p. 449.

conclusions largely from the Western thinkers to convince the Muslim modernists. He has quoted from I. Newton, Montesquieu, J. J. Rousseau, Voltaire, Alfred Wallace, E. M. Caro (1826-1887) and even atheists such as Gustave Le Bon and agnostics such as Spencer, to support that the universe consists of designs and that these designs point to intelligence, purpose and intention, which cannot be characteristics of matter and nature and which could not have been invented by the human being; they are only discovered by him. Intelligence, purpose and intention that are observable in the system of universe point to the existence of the necessary being that has created the world.¹²¹

i) Şabrî's Reassertion of the Importance of Teleological Argument

After neutralizing objections against the teleological proof, Şabrî stresses that "it is the richest [proof], with the widest scope and the most potential to support the existence of God and to disappoint those who deny it".¹²² Despite continuous criticism directed against it, he still does not doubt in its validity and functionality. He even asserts that "it is most appropriate for the mood of the modernists" because it relies on empirical evidence.¹²³ It is different from any other scientific proof because of the unlimited amount of evidence that is endlessly pouring in for its support. Indeed, more sophisticated versions of this proof like the argument from the irreducible biochemical complexity,¹²⁴ the biological information¹²⁵ and the fine-tuning¹²⁶ come to confirm Şabrî's expectations. Therefore, this huge quantity of empirical data or what he terms as *al-tawātūr*, an

¹²¹ See: Ibid., v. 2, pp. 464-470.

¹²² See: Ibid., v. 2, p. 343.

¹²³ See: Ibid.

¹²⁴ See for instance: Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996), William Dembski, *No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot Be Purchased without Intelligence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

¹²⁵ See for instance: Stephen C. Meyer, "Evidence for Design in Physics and Biology: From the Origin of the Universe to the Origin of Life," in Behe, Dembski, and Meyer eds. *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002).

¹²⁶ See for instance: John Jefferson Davis, "The Design Argument, Cosmic 'Fine-Tuning,' and the Anthropic Principle," *The International Journal of Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Jan., 1987). pp. 139-150.

Islamic idiom used in the disciplines of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah to denote the highest number of identical reports that cannot be dismissed as doubtful, leads to nothing else but complete certainty or *al-yaqīn*.¹²⁷ So, in his final conclusion, the teleological proof attains the highest standard of the rational proof which yields untainted certainty.

v. Moral Argument (*al-Dalīl al-Akhlāqī*)

The moral argument for the existence of God is one of the modern arguments. It has been formulated by Kant and offered as an alternative after discrediting all other arguments. Hence, in Ṣabrī's view, Kant exemplifies the overall mistrusts and disregard for metaphysics in modern age. Ṣabrī refers to it as the practical reason argument or *dalīl al-'aql al-'amaliyy* explaining the practical reason in this context as conscience or *al-wijdān* and as the moral argument *dalīl al-akhlāq*.¹²⁸ Ṣabrī's contention is therefore, that Kant is abolishing knowledge about the existence of God and establishing faith in Him on moral grounds. Thus, in Kant's view, faith cannot be disapproved, and it is stronger than knowledge.¹²⁹

Ṣabrī's explanation of Kant's argument goes like this:

the concept of good does not disconnect from the concept of happiness, for the law of ethics may be summarized in this sentence: "do what makes you deserve happiness". If good and happiness are joined together they result in the ultimate happiness. Human beings can ensure to perform acts of goodness but they cannot ensure to be rewarded with happiness for that. The occurrence of happiness is conditioned by external causes and other people, but since the law of ethics is not an illusion, the reward for happiness must be given for the performance of acts of goodness and the ultimate goodness must be achieved, and act of goodness must be followed by the reward of happiness. This situation necessitates the existence of a will that is above human nature; this will is the will of God. So, he proves the existence of God on the basis of the dependence of the ultimate goodness on His existence. If God does not exist, the moral law will not be based on sound foundations.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 441, 443.

¹²⁸ See: *Ibid.*, v. 3, p. 68.

¹²⁹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 3, p. 69.

¹³⁰ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 3, p. 69. Cf. Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles, *A History of the Problems of Philosophy*, v. 2, p. 305.

To Ṣabrī then, the argument is based on the human need for God to preserve the morals in society and to reward good acts. This position i.e. that morals cannot be based except on religion, is generally represented by supporters of religion.

a) Ṣabrī's Comparison between Moral and Rational Arguments

Ṣabrī compares between the steps undertaken by Kant to prove the existence of God with the steps of different rational arguments. So, in his view, Kant establishes the existence of God in an unusual way. His starting point is morality that is centred at the heart of human being. The ultimate good is summarized in the virtue rewarded by happiness. Since virtue is not always rewarded with happiness and since that is the feeling of human being that he should be rewarded, there must be a being that rewards the virtue with what it deserves. Since that cannot be realized in this life, life after death must exist and resurrection must be imminent. The Lord of the other life must exist, the Judge of the Day of Judgment and all His perfect attributes.¹³¹

The difference with the rational arguments is that the existence of God is established before anything else either through our own existence or through the existence of anything else in this world. Then, it is easy to establish the Day of Judgment and necessity of preparing for that Day by regulating morality and behaviour. Therefore, morality in the rational arguments is only secondary, and it comes after the existence of God, the existence of the human and its importance.¹³²

b) Ṣabrī's Criticism of Moral Argument

Ṣabrī appreciates Kant's argument for the existence of God for a number of reasons. It gives importance to morality, connects morality with religion, supports the existence of God in the age of atheism, looks at His existence from the position of a believer and emphasizes on the practical side of faith even more than Islam in

¹³¹ See: Ibid., v. 3, pp. 71-72.

¹³² See: Ibid., v. 3, p. 72.

which works or *al-'amal* is part of faith or *al-īman*. In spite of that, his criticism of moral argument is pervasive. Hence it will be summarized and presented in as comprehensive points as possible:¹³³

- 1) God's existence cannot be proved by mere human need for His existence especially if it is demanded by those who adhere to moral values.
- 2) Man can rebel against ethical bounds and thus dispense with the need for the existence of God.
- 3) There are supporters of ethical values who believe in God as a need for the society; not as reality established through rational argumentation.
- 4) Proof is what leads to discovery of fact; not what describes a need or supports a good thing or entails an interest no matter how great it is.
- 5) A sincere believer cannot be convinced by this argument because he will never accept God's existence only because it is needed for societies and not because God is reality.
- 6) The argument is understood as coincidence of society's need and belief in God, not as a step further i.e. that God really exists.
- 7) The argument is prone to misunderstanding.
- 8) It is not self-sufficient.
- 9) There is circularity in it: morality is based on the belief in the existence of God and the existence of God is established on morality. So, which one of them is more important?
- 10) Morality is used as a base for the existence of God although God's existence is the basis for everything.
- 11) Belief in God is necessitated for the maintenance of morality although it is result of the belief in the existence of God.
- 12) The argument is good for serving the society but it is not good for serving the truth or *al-Haqīqah*.
- 13) God's existence is not conditioned by good or bad morality in society.

¹³³ See: Ibid., v. 3, pp. 69-71.

- 14) It is based on the inclination of heart; not on the endorsement of reason.
- 15) Morality is important but it does not entail contradiction and impossibility.
- 16) It is not correct to move from an issue in the sphere of morality to an issue in the rational sphere.
- 17) Positive aspects of this argument are weak while its negative aspects are too strong.
- 18) It is strange how Kant denies teleological argument although in the moral argument he accepts the reward in the afterlife.
- 19) Even if God's existence is proved by this argument it does not prove necessary existence which is the requirement as far as God's existence is concerned.
- 20) The argument stems from a particular Christian context where emotions are given more important place than rational arguments.

* * *

For Şabrî then, the existence of God is the most important tenet of religion. It is not just a matter of faith but it is a principle that can be established by rational reasoning. The content of classical rational arguments is valid, but they must be presented in an easier and simpler way. Modern critics are significant but their criticism does not show the weakness of classical arguments, instead it shows the extent to which modern thought has degenerated. Therefore, general Western thought needs to be revised and taken with caution before modern criticism is taken into account. The same is the case with science; modern science may be understood to be anti-God but in reality it is not like that. Science must be guided by rationality, not by materialism and positivism.

Chapter II

Prophethood and Miracles

This chapter deals with the issue of prophethood which is —after the existence of God— the second most important principle in Islamic theology. Since prophethood is intrinsically related to miracles they will also be discussed here in a separate section.

i. Prophethood

The usual practice of the classic *Mutakallimūn* is that they devote considerable space to the etymological and terminological meaning of the terms such as *al-nubuwwah* and *al-risālah* which are used to denote the concept of prophethood.¹ Ṣabrī does not follow such a way, but it is obvious that this kind of highly sophisticated linguistic and philosophical exercise underlines his intellectual discourse. The elements of those classic definitions are clearly discernable in his thought and they conspicuously serve as his unstated points of reference. It is natural that his loyalty to them as a *Mutakallim* is unquestionable. However, it may not be characterized as blind following or *al-taqlīd*; rather it is fruitfully creative and critical.

Ṣabrī argues that the contemporary confusion regarding prophethood and miracles in modern Egypt stems from ambiguous and incomplete definition of Egypt's intellectual leader and religious reformer Muḥammad 'Abduh. According to 'Abduh, the definition of a prophet is:

A human being [*al-insān*] who is disposed [*al-fiṭrah*] towards the truth [*al-ḥaqq*], theoretically [*ilman*] and practically [*amalan*], i.e. does not know but the truth and does not do but the truth in accordance with the requirements of wisdom. This happens to him naturally, i.e. does not require intellection [*al-fikr*] or consideration [*al-naẓar*] rather [it happens] by the divine instruction [*al-ta'lim al-ilāhiyy*]. If his disposition leads him to

¹ See: S'ad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1998), v. 5, pp. 5-10. Cf. 'Aḍud al-Dīn Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Marwāqif* (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, nd), pp. 337-339.

invite the brothers of his kind towards what is his innate nature, he is a messenger [*al-rasūl*] also, and if not, he is only a prophet [*al-nabiyy*]. Think about it because it is a subtle point.²

Ṣabīrī's thorough analysis points that 'Abduh's definition does not contain the characteristics of prophethood or *al-nubuwwah*, message or *al-risālah*, revelation or *al-wahy*, sent angel or *malak mursal*, revealed book or *kitāb munazzal* and miracle or *al-mu'jizah*.³ It merely emphasizes the natural disposition or *al-fiṭrah* and does not exclude that divine instruction may be the general *al-ta'līm* for the whole of humanity as in the verse "taught man that which he knew not" or *'allama al-insān mā lam ya'lam*.⁴ Furthermore, Ṣabīrī objects because "this definition is unknown to Islam, Muslims and followers of all religions or *al-millīyyūn*".⁵ Ṣabīrī strongly believes that 'Abduh definition provides both a stimulant and an excuse for reinterpretation of prophethood *in the light of modern science and philosophy*.⁶ What Ṣabīrī wants to convey may perhaps be better illustrated with his own definition which is expressed in a somewhat modern way without, however, violating the indispensable elements of classic definitions:

[...] the prophet is a human being who enjoys a special connection with God which is above the connection which happens to every rational being while inferring about his Lord through the proofs of cosmos. He receives revelation from Him, and this revelation is above the inspiration of the world sciences to scientists of the great projects for the great people. This level of humanity is not achievable but it is characterized by being a special favour from God for those whom He chooses from His servants.⁷

² *Ta'liqāt al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh 'alā Sharḥ al-Dawānī li 'l-'Aqā'id al-'Aḍudiyyah* (Cairo: Al-Matba'ah al-Khayriyyah, 1292), pp. 152-153. Cf. *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, pp. 20, 40-41.

³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 25. Cf. Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāsid*, v. 5, pp. 5-10. 'Aḍud al-Dīn Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, pp. 337-339.

⁴ The Qur'ān: *Al-'Alaq*, 5.

⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, pp. 40-41, footnote no. 1, p. 160. The term *al-millīyyūn* was especially used in the Ottoman Empire as a name for all non-Muslim population.

⁶ It is not a coincidence therefore that Muḥammad Farīd Wajdi titled a series of articles on the life of the Prophet p.b.u.h. in the journal of Al-Azhar University as *Al-Sīrah al-Muḥammadiyyah taḥt Daw al-'Ilm wa 'l-Falsafah*. Muḥammad Rajab Bayyūmī published them in book form (Cairo: Dār al-Miṣriyyah al-Lubnāniyyah, 1993).

⁷ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4 p. 152. For shorter versions of this definition, see: *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 114, 123.

a) The Place of Prophethood

Hierarchically, in the classic Islamic manuals of *Kalām*, prophethood or *al-nubuwwah* usually comes in second place immediately after the existence of God and just before the section on resurrection or *al-b'ath*.⁸ That symbolizes the importance of this religious tenet in the overall theological structure of Islam and also explains, to a great extent, Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī's organization of themes in his *magnum opus*. Compared to the classics, there is a lot of innovation and creativity in his style, given the new developments in human thought, but it is obvious that he does not step out from the overall *Kalāmī* paradigm. He absorbs the intellectual challenges of his age and places them within the well established and, for him, well known Islamic standards. That enables him to think analytically and critically, to continue and reinvigorate the tradition of *Kalām* and to make himself clear to his traditionally oriented fellows and the modern Muslim intellectual audience, which is his main focus.

The significance of this approach gives fruits right away. Ṣabrī immediately observes that the modern Westerners do not pay attention to the subject of prophethood and that they do not discuss it under a specific title as it is the norm in his own scholarly environment.⁹ He directs his reader's attention to a noteworthy phenomenon that many Westerners believe in God but that a very small number of them actually believe in prophethood.¹⁰ Searching for adequate reasons to explain this state of affairs, he suggests that the overall apathy surrounding the subject of prophethood in the West is considerably caused by Christianity itself since it pronounces the divinity of Jesus rather than his prophethood. What follows is also a differing position on miracles; while they are considered as signs of Jesus' divinity and proofs for the existence of God in

⁸ See: Ṣabrī's distribution of his main work and his statements on this: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, pp. 160-163-164.

⁹ See: Ibid., v. 1, pp. 114-115 and v. 2, pp. 19, 21.

¹⁰ See: Ibid., v. 1, pp. 114-145. Cf. Rashīd Ridhā, "T'arīf al-Wahy wa 'l-Nubuwwah wa 'l-Anbiyā' 'Ind al-Naṣārā wa ma Yarid 'Alayhim" and "Al-Āyāt wa 'l-'Ajā'ib wa 'l-Nubuwwah 'Indanā wa 'Indahum," in *Al-Wahy al-Muḥammadī* (Beirut: Al-Mu'assasat 'Izz al-Dīn, 1406 [1935]), pp. 95-99 and 105-107 respectively.

Christianity, in Islamic thought they are treated as affirming signs of prophethood¹¹ and, therefore, point to the authenticity of a prophet's claim; not to the existence of God which is otherwise established through proper rational arguments.¹² However, Şabrî does not seem to perceive the negative connotations of the idea of Deism and its impact on the general decline in the belief in prophethood although he spots the significance of viewing the world in purely mechanical terms.

b) Reason, Science and Prophethood

Methodologically, while the classical *Mutakallimūn* establish the necessary existence of God relying exclusively on rational proofs or *al-'aql* without reference to the scripture *al-naql*, they try to prove the rational possibility or *al-imkān al-'aqliyy* of the prophethood and miracles only. However, they further reinforce it to the level of necessity by using scriptural evidence i.e. the Qur'ān and the Sunnah or historical occurrence. That is why prophethood, miracle and resurrection are categorized in the group of so called "heard things" or *al-sam'īyyāt*, clearly referring to the fact that this kind of beliefs are received through revelation rather than through immediate rational argumentation.¹³ In the case of Şabrî, it is evident that it is not only that he subscribes to this intellectual paradigm, rather he suggests it as the only correct paradigm to explore the nature of prophethood and miracles. Thus, he reinforces the classical Islamic stance on the relation between religion and reason which is to him under threat in modern times.

Explaining further, Şabrî argues that there is a difference between what is established on rational grounds and what is established on scriptural grounds. He maintains that the non-existence of prophets does not entail rational impossibility as the non-existence of God does, except if it is a type impossibility called *muḥāl li*

¹¹ Functions of miracles according to Şabrî are also: (a) guidance or *hidāyah* (b) warning or *indhār* and (c) honor or *takrīm*. See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 82.

¹² See: the previous chapter on the Existence of God.

¹³ See: *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 24-25.

ghayrib i.e. impossibility due to something else.¹⁴ Moreover, he emphasizes that the difference between the two is that the existence of prophets is not a necessary existence like the existence of God.¹⁵ So, the proof for prophethood will never reach the strength of the proof for the existence of God. Consequently, the opponents should not expect "us" to establish prophethood on pure rational grounds; it is only the rational possibility or *al-imkān al-'aqliyy* that is required. Again, proving its rational necessity is not required as in the case of God's existence. The scripture establishes its materialization or *al-wuqū'* in reality.¹⁶ In short he says:

firstly, the existence of God is established by a necessary rational proof. Then the rational possibility of the "heard things" —such as prophethood, miracle and hereafter— is established based on the existence of God, and finally their materialization is established through reports of prophets who are supported by miracles from God, [the prophets] from whom the falsity is not conceivable.¹⁷

After identifying the place of prophethood in relation to reason and revelation, Şabrī attempts to figure out a way that is scientifically acceptable. To that effect, he argues that prophethood, although not logically necessary, is experimentally demonstrable because prophets experience it. The others cannot experience prophethood directly, but they can experience miracles which are the proof for prophethood and therefore inseparable from it. For them, Şabrī argues, "experiencing miracles is like experiencing prophethood".¹⁸ His next step is naturally that reports about this have been recorded by trustworthy people and this will be discussed shortly.

On the other hand, Şabrī notices a deviation among his contemporaries who tend to give more importance to the writings on prophethood, and especially on the life of the Prophet Muḥammad p.b.u.h. than to the existence of God. To

¹⁴ See: *Ma'wqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 25.

¹⁵ See: *Ibid.*

¹⁶ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 25.

¹⁸ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, pp. 25-26.

him, this goes against methodological norms accepted among the *Mutakallimūn*. The reason for this, as he argues, is that due to their inability to prove the existence of God on the basis of positive scientific knowledge and their imitation of Western orientalist who pay considerable attention to the Prophet's life, personality and achievements. Under pressure of modern science and philosophy, these thinkers felt that the only correct way to prove the validity of Islam was through the life of the Prophet p.b.u.h. However, although the splendour of his life's moral, educational, spiritual, military and economic perfection offer a wonderful source for inspiration for the present generations, yet Ṣabrī believes that it is methodologically incorrect to give it preference over the existence of God, because, prophethood cut off from the existence of God has no rational, logical or religious grounds to stand on.¹⁹

c) Genius and Prophethood

Ṣabrī draws attention to a mushrooming phenomenon of new books authored by prominent writers such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykel²⁰ and Muḥammad Farīd Wajdi²¹ and recommended by official religious figures such as Al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī²² and semi-officials like Al-Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā²³ on the life of Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. He observes that the stress in these books is on the human genius of the Prophet p.b.u.h. rather than the God-given excellence of his prophethood, and on the so called scientific method with utter disregard for the traditional discipline of *al-ḥadīth*. Moreover, except for some rare instances as 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād's *'Abqariyyat Muḥammad*,²⁴ the genius of the Prophet is treated independently from the

¹⁹ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 116.

²⁰ *Ḥayāt Muḥammad* (Cairo: 1933). English trans. Isma'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *The Life of Muḥammad* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1st published by American Trust Publications, 1976).

²¹ See: *Al-Sīrah al-Muḥammadiyyah taḥta Ḍaw al-'Ilm wa 'l-Falsafah*.

²² Al-Marāghī wrote a foreword for the first edition of Haykal's *The Life of Muḥammad*, pp. xxi-xxx.

²³ See: *Al-Manār*, May 3, 1935, p. 793.

²⁴ See: It is the first book in *Marwū'at al-'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād al-Islāmiyyah* 2nd vol. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1970), pp. 17-160.

prophethood as if the quality of the former is higher than the quality of the latter.²⁵ Şabrî convincingly argues that the cause of such widespread phenomenon is that modern writers gave in to the pressure of "modern science and reason attached to it"²⁶ which do not endorse metaphysical realities such as prophethood, and which compel those writers to take away essential miraculous characteristics from the prophethood that "are acknowledged by Muslims and the adherents of other faiths".²⁷ What adds to Şabrî's conviction that modern writers prefer the quality of genius over the quality of prophethood is that (a) they interpret miracles to fit demands and requirements of naturalist mechanic views of the cosmos, or (b) they deny them altogether because they cannot justify them scientifically. That leads to an entirely new concept of prophethood which emphasizes ordinary qualities of the Prophet p.b.u.h as a human being which, in their ultimate perfection and sophistication, become mere signs of immensity and genius that are possessed by any great leader or reformer, but which, in no way, represent the extraordinary metaphysical quality of the prophet which is as essential to Islam and as to other religions. As an example, Şabrî analyzes arguments of Dr. Zakî Mubārak who explicitly warns that the traditional concept of prophethood will soon collapse in the wake of modern intellectual developments. The only way to safeguard it is to consider it as an astonishing human genius rather than extraordinary metaphysical reality.²⁸ In such a case, Şabrî maintains, for Arab Muslims, Muhammad p.b.u.h. is reduced to an Arab national leader, for the sake of Arab identity and pride, while the non-Arab Muslims will consider him as a brilliant example to follow. As for the non-Muslims, the attention is shifted from prophethood to genius which, again, does not highlight the real nature of the Prophet's message. Furthermore, Islam will have to be reinterpreted as a collection of human teachings rather than religion disclosed from above.²⁹

²⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 9.

²⁶ Ibid., v. 1, p. 113.

²⁷ Ibid., v. 1, p. 111.

²⁸ See: *Majallat al-Risālah*, h. 1358. Quoted by Şabrî in *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 7.

²⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, pp. 7-9.

In his final analysis, Ṣabrī dismisses this kind of attempt to substitute prophethood with genius as failing to encompass the metaphysical reality of prophethood and as contra-productive and detrimental to the life of the Prophet and consequently the essential message of Islam.

d) Acquisition of Prophethood

The controversy of the genius of the Prophet p.b.u.h. prompts Ṣabrī to reopen one of the issues in classical *Kalām*, namely, whether prophethood may be acquired through human efforts or it is solely a grace from God Who bestows it upon those whom He chooses.³⁰ During his discourse, he reaffirms the standard position of the majority or *al-jumhūr* which is that prophethood as a quality is not acquired through ordinary human means but that it is solely a gift from above.³¹ Ṣabrī uses some innovative logic in his arguments but they are one and the same in their essence. In short he emphasizes following points:

- 1) If prophethood may be acquired through human efforts, then Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. is not the Seal of the prophets. It means that through individual efforts other people may also achieve prophethood.³²
- 2) If the prophethood of Muhammad p.b.u.h. was acquired through his brilliance and genius then he lied when he claimed that the Qur'ān was revelation from God; the Qur'ān, in such a case, would be a fruit of his own literary talent. This kind of deception is detrimental to the ideal of genius and heroism or to their perfection at least, not to say how harmful it is for prophethood.³³
- 3) There is nothing pagan in true prophethood and it does not lead to deification of the prophet or to his worship. On the contrary, it affirms his status as a special servant of God.³⁴

³⁰ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 152. Cf. *Hāshiyat al-Imām al-Bayjūrī 'alā Jawharat al-Tawhīd*, ed. 'Alī Jum'ah (Cairo: Dār al-salām, 2002), p. 211-213.

³¹ See: Ibid.

³² See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 153.

³³ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 153.

³⁴ See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 153-154.

4) There is no way that a person who strives to obtain the status of prophethood would know that he is a true prophet if it is not revealed to him and there is no way that he could convince others that he is a true prophet without proving it with miracles.³⁵

5) A true prophet cannot make mistakes about the content of revelation because it is dictated to him from a reliable source, while a prophet who attains prophethood through his own effort cannot guarantee that veracity because it is a product of his own experience.³⁶

6) And, finally, it is only a true prophet who can specify the details the path to God and His worship and no one else can do that in spite of his excellence and wisdom.³⁷

Hence, Şabrî strongly reaffirms the old position of Muslim theologians that prophethood is a divine gift which cannot be acquired through human efforts.

ii. The Problem of Miracles

One of Şabrî's chief arguments against modern Muslim thinkers who prefer the quality of genius over the quality of prophethood in Prophet Muḥammad p.b.u.h. is their sceptical position towards the nature and reality of miracles and their attempt to interpret them according to modern scientific and philosophical discourse.³⁸

Şabrî's examination of the problem of miracles may broadly be divided into two: (a) a theoretical perspective or *'ilm al-dirāyah* and (b) a historical perspective *'ilm al-riwāyah*.³⁹ These two perspectives simultaneously happen to be traditional

³⁵ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 154.

³⁶ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 155.

³⁷ See: Ibid.

³⁸ For a classical exposition of the problem of miracles in a *Kalāmī* context, see: Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, v. 5, pp. 11-19. Cf. Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, p. 339-342. *Ḥāshiyat al-Imām al-Bayjūrī*, p. 220-222.

³⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 69. Cf. 'Allamah Shiblī's *Sirat Al-Nabī* trans. Fazlur Rahman (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1970), pp. 1-98. Shiblī's (1851-1914) work was translated in Ottoman Turkish. See: *İslam Tarihi Asr-ı Saadet: Peygamberimizin Siyreti*, trans. Ömer Rıza Doğrul (İstanbul: Amedî Matbaası, 1928).

disciplines in the discipline of *'ulūm al-ḥadīth* and modern Western disposition towards the problem of miracle as can be observed in rational and scientific discussions on one hand and examination of historicity and veracity of biblical literature on the other.

a) Objections against Miracles

1) Non-Existence of God

In Ṣabīrī's view, the most dangerous objection against the possibility and actual realization of miracles is the non-existence of God and prophets peace be upon them. The thrust of his argument is that since God's existence is rationally provable and the existence of prophets is rationally possible, this objection is automatically neutralized.⁴⁰ The occurrences of miracle would not be justifiable and they would not be purposeful if God did not exist. In this, he does not fundamentally differ from modern Christian theologians.⁴¹ Furthermore, contrary to the understanding of the proponents of the genius of the Prophet p.b.u.h., it is not the prophet who makes the miracles but it is God who creates them in order to verify the prophet's mission and support him in his endeavour.⁴²

2) Miracles Oppose Reason and Science

The opponents of miracles often object that miracles are opposed to reason and science or that they are impossible both rationally and scientifically. Emphasizing the importance of differentiation between these two terms, Ṣabīrī warns that they should not be confused.⁴³ He argues that if miracles were "rationally impossible", then they would have never taken place in reality; but when it is stated that they are "scientifically impossible" this means that they are not possible according to the materialist and positivist conception of science; not

⁴⁰ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 26.

⁴¹ See: William Lane Craig, "The Problem of Miracles: A Historical and Philosophical Perspective" in David Wenham and Craig Blomberg eds., *Gospel Perspectives* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), v. 6, pp. 9-40.

⁴² See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 33.

⁴³ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 94.

by science as properly understood.⁴⁴ Paradoxically, like Hume,⁴⁵ he reaffirms the true nature of a miracle is that it violates the order of nature or *kharq al-ʿādah*, but Ṣabrī emphasizes, contrary to Hume, that it does not mean that it violates the order of reason or *kharq al-ʿaql*, the reason which, in his view, always supervises science. Hence, the perspectives of reason and science towards miracle are neither the same in principle nor are they the same in reality of modern context; rather they are substantially dissimilar, and therefore, their difference should be emphasized.

Dealing with the objection that miracles are rationally impossible Ṣabrī emphasizes that the modern crisis of miracles is caused chiefly by science which has subdued reason.⁴⁶ He reiterates his elaborate views on the relation between reason, science and religion emphasizing the central role of reason. In the light of that, he argues that there are five categories regarding miracles: (a) the possibility or *al-imkān* (b) the occurrence or *al-wuqūʿ* (c) necessity of occurrence or *ḍarūrat al-wuqūʿ* (d) non-occurrence or *ʿadam al-wuqūʿ* (e) impossibility of occurrence or *istiḥālat al-wuqūʿ*.⁴⁷ In his view, modern Muslim writers jumble these categories together although they need to be sorted out carefully. In short, the role of reason is to prove the rational possibility, impossibility or necessity of miracles while the role of science is to register whether miracles have taken place or not. Therefore, science cannot issue a judgment that miracles are rationally impossible. It is out of its jurisdiction. That kind of judgment solely belongs to the jurisdiction of reason.⁴⁸ Although having a relevant point of view, Ṣabrī appears limiting the role of science and reducing its scope to encompass only narrow proportions of its domain.

As has already been noted, Ṣabrī does not isolate miracles from other principle beliefs in religion such as the existence of God and prophets. If the existence of God is accepted then it is easy to prove the possibility of miracles. Like

⁴⁴ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 105.

⁴⁵ See: "Of Miracles," in *An Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding, and an Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), p. 114.

⁴⁶ See: *Mawqif al-ʿAql*, v. 4, p. 107.

⁴⁷ See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁸ Ibid., v. 4, p. 32.

the Ash'arī and Māturīdī *Mutakallimūn*, Ṣabrī argues that God is capable of doing everything that is rationally possible or *Qādir 'alā kull al-mumkināt*.⁴⁹ In other words, God is capable of doing anything that does not lead to rational impossibility. That, in his view, is wider than what the opponents of miracles and prophethood suppose. Ṣabrī emphasizes that they deny miracles because it is not in the capacity of the human to violate the order in nature. Interestingly, he relates this view to a range of Western thinkers such as Schleiermacher, Ritschel, John Stuart Mill and William Stanley John.⁵⁰ The summary of their argument is also that there is no point in miracles if God does not exist. If He exists, then He can violate the order of nature and miracles may happen. So, Ṣabrī openly acknowledges that all his arguments about the rational possibility of miracles are based on an assumption that the existence of God is accepted. If the existence of God is not accepted, then there is no point in discussing miracles. In that case, he suggests that the opponents of miracles should go back to the problem of existence of God again.⁵¹ That is a significant methodological position.

Furthermore, Ṣabrī elaborates that, for example, creating sky and earth is also one of the rationally possible things, although very hard to imagine if sky and earth did not exist in front of our eyes. If a man was told about the creation of the universe before its creation he would probably think that it would have been impossible. So, whatever exists is possible. Because miracles belong to the same category of things that actually took place, they are also possible. For instance, in the miracle of Moses p.b.u.h., did not God create the stick and did not He create the snake? So, to make snake out of stick should not be impossible because He already created both of them prior to the miracle. Similarly, there are complicated organs such as human brain that are more complex and sophisticated than miracles, but because we are so used to them, we take them as something ordinary. So, all the rationally possible things are equal for God; there is nothing easier or harder as

⁴⁹ See: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī 'l-Itiqād* (Damascus and Beirut: Dār Qutaybah, 2003), pp. 74-75.

⁵⁰ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 26

⁵¹ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, pp. 26-27.

is the case with human beings. Moreover, Ṣabrī notes, that in the modern age, in which science has become so popular, people see the sky and assume it present and possible while they do not see the prophets and miracles and they tend to assume them impossible.⁵² This is a good example on the part of Ṣabrī to illustrate modern materialistic and sensory based mentality.

3) Violation of Habitual Order (*Kharq al-ʿĀdah*)

As for the common objection that miracles violate the habitual order of nature which was considered as a serious objection given the mechanistic view of the world that was understood to be governed by eternal immutable laws,⁵³ Ṣabrī points to a paradox that “when the Westerners want to deny the existence of God they deny the order in nature, but when they want to deny the existence of miracles they approve the order of nature”.⁵⁴ Ṣabrī’s answer to the objection of violation of natural laws may be given from two perspectives. The first is that those who believe in the existence of God understand that God set those laws, that they are unalterable and that the existence of those laws is proof for the existence of God. However, it does not rule out that God, who set those laws, can change them. When He changes them in order to endorse miracles, which also become a law, but an exceptional law or *al-sunnah al-istithnā’iyyah*. From these violations of natural laws, the proof for the existence of prophets is taken.⁵⁵ Moreover, the laws of nature cannot work alone. They always need to be supported by the will and care of God Who makes each and every cause efficient in each instance and circumstance. So given that the causes cannot be efficient without God, everything

⁵² See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 27-29.

⁵³ Benedict Spinoza held that “a miracle in the sense of contravention of natural law [is] an absurdity” even before Newton published his *Principia* (1687) that created the idea of mechanistic world. See: *Tractatus theologico-politicus* translated and edited by R. H. M. Elwes (London and New York: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., nd. [1670]), pp. 81-82.

⁵⁴ See: *Mawqif al-ʿAql*, v. 4, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁵ See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 29-30.

in this world relies directly on Him. In that case, there is no objection against miracles which, like everything else in nature, depends on divine intervention.⁵⁶

There is an important point raised by modern Muslim writers such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal in this regard⁵⁷ they argue that there is credible Qur'ānic evidence that God will never change the laws of nature.⁵⁸ Ṣabrī objects to this kind of understanding and proves beyond doubt that what is meant in these verses is not the laws of nature but the laws regarding those who did not accept the authority of miracles. Thus, he differentiates between general laws or *Sunnat Allāh al-'Umūmiyyah* which is the category of natural laws, and the exceptional laws or *Sunnat Allāh al-Istithnā'iyyah* which are His direct interventions that interrupt the ordinary mode of natural laws.⁵⁹

Secondly, and more specifically, Ṣabrī maintains that the natural laws are not more than:

general propositions that are continually working the same way without reaching the level of necessity. Their opposites are not rationally impossible because those propositions are the result of experiments. No matter how these results may be true, the necessary propositions may not be based on them, because —after all— they do not signify logical necessity.⁶⁰

Ṣabrī provides lengthy quotations from the works of David Hume, Émile Saisset, G. W. Leibnitz, Henry Poincaré and T. H. Huxley.⁶¹ Not all of these thinkers endorse the possibility of miracles, but they point to the fallible process by which the laws of nature have been discovered and defined.

⁵⁶ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 33.

⁵⁷ See: "Preface to the Second Edition," in *Ḥayāt Muḥammad*, pp. lxxvi-lxxvii. Cf. *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 117.

⁵⁸ The Qur'ān: "No change wilt thou find in the [Sunnah] of Allāh." *Al-Aḥzāb*, 62. "But no change wilt thou find in Allāh's [Sunnah]: no turning off wilt thou find in Allāh's [Sunnah]." *Fāṭir*, 43. "No change wilt thou find in the [Sunnah] of Allāh" *Al-Faṭḥ*, 23

⁵⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 107.

⁶⁰ Ibid., v. 4, p. 30.

⁶¹ See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 30-31, 26-27.

4) Objections against Miracles from Specific Islamic Context

As may be observed from aforementioned objections, some of them are applicable to all religions, but some are particular to Muslims only. One such specific objection against miracle that emerges from the modern Muslim context is (a) that the Qur'ān does not mention the miracles of the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h., or (b) that miracles are opposing the Qur'ān. This view is suggested by Haykal who apparently won the support of Al-Shaykh al-Akbar Al-Maraghī⁶² and Al-Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā⁶³ and who enjoys the sympathy of contemporary thinkers such as Farīd Wajdī and modern writers such as Tawfīq al-Ṭawīl and Zakī Mubārak. Ṣabrī argues that there are two different things here; the first, if the Qur'ān does not mention miracles it does not mean that it opposes them. Furthermore, it does not mean that they cannot be mentioned in the collection of *al-ḥadīth* which, by its very nature, is the explanation of the Qur'ān.⁶⁴ Secondly, if the Qur'ān mentions something that opposes that miracles occurred to the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h., then the nature of such claims must be examined and clarified. One such claim is that the Qur'ān explicitly states that there is no change in God's laws or *sunan*, and this has already been examined. The other one is that the pagans of Quraysh requested Muḥammad p.b.u.h. to show miracles but that the Qur'ān denied them, which will be discussed shortly.⁶⁵

The aforementioned Muslim thinkers also differentiate between the Qur'ān as "a human rational miracle" or *al-mu'jizah al-'aqliyyah al-insāniyyah*⁶⁶ and "the cosmic miracles" or *al-mu'jizāt al-kawniyyah* which are interruptions of natural

⁶² See: "Foreword to the First Edition" of Haykal's book, pp. xiii-xx.

⁶³ See: *Al-Manār*, May 3, 1935, p. 793. Quoted by Haykal in the "Preface to the Second Edition" of his *The Life of Prophet*, p. lxxv. For Riḍā's elaborate views, see: *Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadiyy*, pp. 105-116.

⁶⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 64.

⁶⁵ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 185. The Qur'ān: They say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "(Allah) hath certainly power to send down a sign: but most of them understand not. *Al-An'ām*, 37. And the unbelievers say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" *Al-R'ad*, 7. The Unbelievers say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" *Al-R'ad*, 27. Ye they say: "Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?" *Al-'Ankabūt*, 50. They say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "(Allah) hath certainly power to send down a sign: but most of them understand not." *Al-An'ām*, 37.

⁶⁶ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 77.

laws.⁶⁷ To them, rational miracles are acceptable but cosmic miracles are not, simply because they cannot be ascertained by science. Şabrî opposes this division and this view and argues that there is no ground on which this division can be justified. Moreover, the Qur'ân extensively mentions cosmic miracles of previous prophets and points to some of them when talking about the Last Prophet p.b.u.h. So, modern Muslim thinkers run into an obvious contradiction; on one hand they claim that the Qur'ân is a human rational miracle and the only true miracle, while on the other, they deny cosmic miracles which are abundantly present in the Qur'ân.⁶⁸ After all, Şabrî claims that it does not make a difference for the Westerners because they deny miracles altogether and they deny the Qur'ân specifically. So, modern Muslim thinkers will fail to attract or impress the Westerners to Islam in such a way although they used this excuse as a pretext to introduce a modern reinterpretation of miracles.⁶⁹

b) The Authenticity of the Collections of al-Ḥadīth on Miracles

Şabrî recalls the popular atmosphere of considering religion as a myth and the resounding words of Farah Anṭun, Farīd Wajdi⁷⁰ and others who explicitly reinforce such attitudes in the East and who emphasize scientific re-examination of historical veracity of reports on miracles of Muḥammad p.b.u.h. Şabrî's analysis shows that modern Muslim writers' position is that miracles are not vindicated by science and that they are not accepted by reason. To them, this increases the concern that there are mythical elements in Islam as in any other religion and that these elements must be eradicated in order to save and preserve the pristine message of the Last Prophet p.b.u.h. Moreover, such elements open doors for orinentalists to criticize Islam and disregard Muslim claims of its coherence and accord with rational and scientific norms.⁷¹

⁶⁷ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 43.

⁶⁸ See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 44.

⁶⁹ See: Ibid.

⁷⁰ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 4.

⁷¹ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 79.

Ṣabṛī, however, disagrees with this methodology because it is based on an apologetic approach in which important aspects of religion are done away with to accommodate modern trends in modern science and thought. So, for instance, Haykal wants to explain away all the reports on miracles that are registered in the biographical books or *kutub al-sīrah* of Muḥammad p.b.u.h. and his sayings *kutub al-ḥadīth*. His arguments may be summarized as follows: (a) the Prophet p.b.u.h. himself forbade any written preservation of his sayings,⁷² (b) these sayings are of very late collection,⁷³ (c) there is noteworthy difference between the early collections which contain notably less number of reports on miracles from later collection which are abound in them,⁷⁴ (d) these saying are written for religious and ritual purposes rather than scientific ones,⁷⁵ (e) some of them may be fabricated to support a political view,⁷⁶ (f) or avail a favour from the ruler,⁷⁷ (g) or because that would make the Last Prophet p.b.u.h. look superior to other prophets⁷⁸ and some other reasons which have already been discussed. Moreover, Haykal introduces two conditions to accept reports on miracles from the *ḥadīth* literature: (a) they should agree with the Qur'ān and (b) agree with cosmic laws.⁷⁹ In short, Ṣabṛī argues that Haykal wants to prove that these miracles were deliberately fabricated in order to increase the greatness of the Prophet p.b.u.h.

It does not seem suitable for the purpose of this study to examine the details of Ṣabṛī's massive response to Haykal,⁸⁰ but it is perhaps useful to illustrate the influence orientalist exercised on him, and in return, the way the orientalist applied the findings of modern biblical scholarship on the collections of *al-ḥadīth*.

⁷² See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 61.

⁷³ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 87.

⁷⁴ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 46.

⁷⁵ See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 45, 75.

⁷⁶ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 60.

⁷⁷ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 72.

⁷⁸ See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 76-77. Cf. "Preface to the Second Edition," in *The Life of Muḥammad*, pp. lxxvi-lxxxvi.

⁷⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 63.

⁸⁰ Ṣabṛī was appointed as professor of Ḥadīth in the school of Mutakhaṣṣiṣīn and in Al-Sulaymāniyyah in 1918. See: Mufarriḥ ibn Sulaimān al-Qawsī, *Al-Shaikh Muṣṭafā Ṣabṛī wa mawqifuhū min al-Fikr al-Wāfid* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 1997), pp. 68-69.

Ṣabrī expresses his surprise that Haykal presents his points as if these points were some novel objections that the scholars of *al-ḥadīth* did not pay attention to, and that they did not respond to it appropriately. He gives extensive examples to prove that the *ḥadīth* literature “is all criticism and filtration”.⁸¹ He maintains that Haykal, who claims to apply the scientific method in his compilation of the biography of the Prophet p.b.u.h., starts from the assumption that (a) miracles are not possible in principle and (b) that modern scientific ways are better than the ways applied by the scholars of *al-ḥadīth*. Since Ṣabrī has dealt with that assumption elsewhere, he responds to the second, reminding about the difference and nature of transmission of the *Sunnah* and the biblical books as well as the superiority of Muslim scholars in recording the *Sunnah* even in modern terms.⁸² Ṣabrī protests that if Haykal’s claims are accepted then the biographical books and collections of prophetic sayings and actions would lose their credibility and authenticity, and Islam —as such— would lose one of its indispensable sources. Furthermore, Ṣabrī argues that Haykal’s criticism of the *ḥadīth* must apply to the Qur’ān as well because it contains numerous verses on miracles of previous prophets.⁸³ To him, it follows logically, but Haykal, for some reason, seems to ignore these implications of his claims. Haykal would like to save the Qur’ān from such a criticism although it applies on it in the same manner as it applies on the *Sunnah*.

c) Modern Interpretations of Miracle

To question the authenticity of the Qur’ānic reports on the occurrences of miracles would utterly discredit any serious Muslim thinker. Although modern thinkers cannot explicitly deny them, they can interpret them. This idea is perhaps best epitomized in Farīd Wajdī who states that:

⁸¹ See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 4, p. 48.

⁸² Ṣabrī extensively quoted from ‘Allāmah Shiblī Nu‘mānī’s *Sirat al-Nabiyy* that was translated into Ottoman. See: “Works by European writers on *Sīrah*,” in ‘Allāmah Shiblī’s *Sirat Al-Nabi*, pp. 85-98. Cf. *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 4, pp. 6, 55, 60, 79, 89, 105.

⁸³ See: *Mawqif al-‘Aql*, v. 4, p. 107.

we should not overemphasize all the aspects of miraculousness as long as they can be interpreted in terms of ordinary causes even if that requires some hard effort [*al-talkīf*], in accordance with the strict confirmation of inquiry and upholding of the scientific canon, having full confidence that research which is not respected by the educated élite, which does not find in it the correct picture of its ideal example in presentation of the issues and their analysis, cannot lead to what is intended of common benefit.⁸⁴

The real question that troubles the modern mind is how to prove that an incident that actually took place was of a miraculous nature. In the Islamic context that is difficult to accept, because it requires the denial of the historical authenticity of both the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Şabrī extensively reviews the instances of modern Muslim interpretations. In the light of that, an attempt will be made to put those instances into categories of interpretation instead of reviewing them one by one. In that way perhaps, Şabrī's position will become clearer.

1) Some miracles may be explained as ordinary events as in the case when the Prophet p.b.u.h. prayed against Surāqah so his horse could not carry him anymore.⁸⁵ Haykal explains this incident to mean that the horse only slipped and thus could not continue the chase.⁸⁶ In Şabrī's view, this interpretation denies the miraculous nature of the event.⁸⁷

2) Some miracles may be explained as natural events like in the case of the sea splitting so that Moses p.b.u.h. and his people may cross to the other shore and escape from the Pharaoh.⁸⁸ Many of the modern thinkers such as Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā explain it in terms of ebb and flow.⁸⁹ Again, the miraculous nature of the event is denied, and, therefore, the miracle is denied altogether.

⁸⁴ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 10.

⁸⁵ For the story, see: Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī and 'Abd al-Ḥafīz Shalabī (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalībī, nd), v. 1, p. 489-490.

⁸⁶ See: *The Life Muḥammad*, pp. lxxix, 168.

⁸⁷ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 43.

⁸⁸ The Qur'ān: Then We told Moses by inspiration: "Strike the sea with thy rod." So it divided, and each separate part became like the huge, firm mass of a mountain. *Al-Shu'arā'*, 64.

⁸⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 20.

- 3) Some miracles may be explained by complicated linguistic manoeuvring like the splitting of the moon⁹⁰ as appearance of the truth by Rashīd Riḍā, or even more complicated the ascension of Jesus p.b.u.h. spiritually only by al-Shaykh Shaltūt; not spiritually and bodily, as it is the stance of Muslim orthodoxy.⁹¹
- 4) Finally, there is the response of Farīd Wajdī in this regard who argues that the verses in which miracles are mentioned are to be regarded as *mutashābihāt*.⁹² He actually applies the Qur'ānic division of the verses into *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* on miracles. He supports his view by Al-Shaykh Rashīd Riḍā's opinion that miracles are *shubḥah* not *ḥujjah*, because *mutāshābih* and *shubḥah* are of the same tripartite root: *shīn*, *bā* and *hā*.⁹³ To Ṣabrī this is not acceptable because miracles are clear signs for the prophet and his people. By declaring miracles as unintelligible they denied its purpose and therefore its nature and function which ultimately lead to the negation of prophethood because without miracles as clear signs, the authenticity of a prophet cannot be verified.

Common to all these categories, except the last one which denies the possibility of understanding the verses and sayings in which miracles are mentioned, is that the reports are not accepted in their original meaning of miracle but that their true meaning is hidden in the text and that this meaning can be reached through the exercise of complicated reinterpretation in terms acceptable to modern intellectuality shaped by science and reason attached to it.

On the other hand, Ṣabrī observes that modern Muslim thinkers tend to consider some "revolutionary events" in the life of the Prophet p.b.u.h. as real miracles. For example, Farīd Wajdī talks about quick literary and social revolution that radically changed Arab society within half a century while in other civilizations such changes took centuries.⁹⁴ Haykal refers to the nobility of the

⁹⁰ The Qur'ān: "The Hour (of Judgment) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder." *Al-Qamar*, 1.

⁹¹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 21.

⁹² See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, pp. 5, 10.

⁹³ "From its standpoint, supernatural events are *ipso facto* doubtful." See: *Al-Manār*, May 3, 1935, p. 793. Quoted by Haykal in the "Preface to the Second Edition" of his *The Life of Prophet*, p. lxxv.

⁹⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 9.

Prophet's conduct and his excellent moral qualities as miracles.⁹⁵ Şabrî acknowledges their good intentions and their ability to highlight these aspects of the Prophet's life but he criticizes them severely for denying the true miracles and considering some ordinary events which are not miracles as genuine miracles. All in all, Şabrî does not consider this kind of explanations of miracles as interpretation or *al-tafsîr* but rather as interpolation or *al-taghyîr*.⁹⁶

Finally, for Şabrî, miracles are (a) not acts of prophet but they are acts of God which (b) do not violate the order of reason but which must violate the order of nature. Although he endorses that miracles should be (c) accompanied by prophet's claim of prophethood and that (d) there is no possibility that miracles can be successfully contra-challenged, he does not emphasize these points because they are not bone of contention in the modern context. Subsequently, miracles belong to the realm of the unseen or *al-ghayb* and they are signs for the authenticity of prophets. Therefore, prophethood is not an acquirable ordinary quality and it cannot be considered as brilliance of human nature. It is a gift of God which necessarily involves other types of miracles such as contacts with angels and revelation. The purpose of prophethood is to assist the human reason and to communicate to the human kind specific details of God's will that cannot be perceived by reason alone. As such, Şabrî reaffirms the traditional meaning of miracles and prophethood and struggles to safeguard it from modern interpretations, which are, in his view, interpolations of their true meaning, function and purpose.

By seriously engaging the modernists on the issue of prophethood and miracles, bringing out relevant points of view which represent theology of Islam, Şabrî strives not only to actualize the importance of rational and religious approaches to the issues at stake but also he tries to offer a common sense understanding of what should be the approach of science —the powerful newcomer in the arena of modern religious studies and classical theology. He

⁹⁵ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 79.

⁹⁶ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 105.

successfully chalks his own way in these turbulent areas of discussion providing us with a unique intellectual discourse. The only unfortunate thing perhaps is that Şabrî focuses so much on liquidating negative aspects of positivistic and materialistic understanding of science which attack religion. Therefore, even in his discourse, science appears too hostile to religion, and this, perhaps, Şabrî did not intend to do. It would have been more interesting to see Şabrî approaching science directly and more positively away from the dilemmas of his age. Obviously, Şabrî remained faithful to the old craftsmanship of *Kalām* which emphasizes that the highest duty and noblest responsibility is to clear the hardest hurdles and toughest objections so that free thinking can take place. Şabrî did define the overall structure of religion, reason and science regarding prophethood and miracles but he did not take his task further towards a more fruitful interaction between religion, reason and science which is not so much loaded with antagonistic relation between them and an attempt to synchronise them in a better way.

Chapter III

Resurrection

As has already been discussed, the third issue that *Mutakallimūn* traditionally deal with in their classical manuals is life after death. It contains many subsections such as the life in Barzakh, resurrection, judgment day, and the eternity in heaven and hell.¹ However, the issue of resurrection is considered as the most crucial because without it, the concept of life after death, judgment day and heaven and hell cannot stand. Therefore, the majority of *Mutakallimūn* devote to it a sizeable and extensive argument. Ṣabrī generally follows their pattern and, like them, limits his discussion to the point of resurrection particularly. However, he does not explain the reasons for doing so. Thus, it seems that he takes *Mutakallimūn*'s prototype as granted and does not feel any need to support his choice with appropriate evidence, although he is facing the challenging context of modernity.

In contrast to the two previous issues that he discussed i.e. the existence of God and prophethood and miracles, he does not deal with the issue of resurrection in detail. It is probably because during his discussion on the existence of God and prophethood many of the related matters have been resolved and the general weight of his argument had reached its momentum. Moreover, the problem of prophethood and miracles and the problem of resurrection comes under the same rubric of the "heard things" or *al-sam'īyyāt* so they have many methodological issues in common. However, it is significant to see again that, similar to his treatment of the existence of God and prophethood, he sets the argument on resurrection in a comparative and critical perspective of the classical and modern.

¹ See: Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāsid fī 'Ilm al-Kalām* ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah (Beirut: 'Ālam al-kutub, 1998), v. 5, pp. 82-161. Cf. 'Aḍud al-Dīn Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (Beirut: 'Ālam al-kutub, nd), pp. 371-384. Al-Imām al-Bayjūrī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Imām al-Bayjūrī 'alā jawharat al-tawḥīd*. ed. 'Alī Jum'ah (Cairo: Dār al-salām, 2002), p. 279-284.

i. Position of Islam on Resurrection

As far as the Islamic position is concerned, Ṣabrī maintains that it is unambiguous. The Qur'ānic verses are explicit about the possibility and occurrence of physical resurrection.² As a result, he maintains that those who deny the resurrection deny the Qur'ān.³ Moreover, they deny common sense as well; because the verses in which resurrection is mentioned are understandable and intelligible.⁴ From a methodological point of view, Ṣabrī argues, as in the case of prophethood and miracles which belong to the "heard things", there is no need for rational proof to establish their necessity; the need is only to establish rational possibility of resurrection. In other words, no objection based on sound logical reasoning should prove it impossible. He also mentions a religious ruling of scholars or *al-fatwa* to the effect of declaring infidelity or *al-kufr* of those who affirm spiritual but deny physical resurrection.⁵ So, the Islamic scripture is clear about physical resurrection, its rational possibility is demonstrable and Muslim scholars issued decrees of *al-takfir* against those who denied it, which —altogether— establish the importance of resurrection in Islamic structure of belief.

ii. The *Kalāmī* Schools on Resurrection

Ṣabrī briefly overviews two major opinions on resurrection in the classic manuals of *Kalām*. The first is the view of the majority, the so called *jumhūr al-mutakallimīn* who hold the position of physical resurrection only. This somehow seems to be ambiguous for a modern reader. For that reason, Ṣabrī clarifies the position of *jumhūr* indicating that they do not imply resurrection of body while

² The verses that he quotes from the Qur'ān: "See they not that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, and never wearied with their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Yea, verily He has power over all things." *Al-Aḥqāf*, 33. "It is He Who begins (the process of) creation; then repeats it; and for Him it is most easy. To Him belongs the loftiest similitude (we can think of) in the heavens and the earth: for He is Exalted in Might, full of wisdom." *Al-Rūm*, 27. "Say, 'He will give them life Who created them for the first time! for He is Well-versed in every kind of creation!'" *Yāsīn*, 79. Other relevant verses usually quoted by the *Mutakallimūn* are: *Al-A'raf*, 29; *Al-Anbiyā'*, 104 and *Al-Ṭariq*, 7.

³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 209.

⁴ See: *Ibid.*

⁵ See: *Ibid.*

excluding the resurrection of soul. In their opinion the soul is considered as an attribute of life which does not exist separately from body; they rather see it as an accident attached to the body or *'arad qāim bi 'l-dhāt*, so when a body dies its soul dies as well. The scriptural evidence that soul dies as well is that "everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face".⁶ So, since death of body implies the death of soul, similarly the resurrection of body implies the resurrection of soul as well.⁷ Therefore, the resurrection of body alone automatically includes the return of life to that body as well. Subsequently, the nature of resurrection according to them is *i'adat al-ma'dūm bi 'aynih* i.e. resurrection of the exact perished [body] that existed in this life.

The second is the view held by Al-Ḥalīmī, Al-Ghazālī, Al-Rāghib and Abū Zayd Al-Dabbūsī who are the cream of the *jumhūr* and who excel by being what is commonly known in Islamic literature as the profound researchers or *al-muḥaqqiqūn*. They do not differ fundamentally with the *jumhūr* except that they work out certain details in an extremely careful way. For instance, they disagree with *jumhūr al-mutakallimīn* that the soul is only an attribute of the body. Interestingly, they rather agree with philosophers like Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā that the soul is created and that it continues to exist separately from the body after death. Ṣabrī explains that the aforementioned verse which proclaims death to everything except God, in fact, means that all the possible things or *al-mumkināt* which depend on God's existence are perishable.⁸ However, it does not explicitly state that the soul perishes as well. This, of course, leaves a lot of place for interpretative manoeuvring. Therefore, they object to the opinion of *jumhūr* that the exact body will be resurrected because there is no point in that since the body is not the essential trait of identity. According to the *muḥaqqiqūn* it is the soul which is unchanging even in this life. It preserves human personality along with those parts of human body that, according to the Prophet p.b.u.h., remain intact

⁶ The Qur'ān: *Al-Qaṣaṣ*, 88.

⁷ See: *Marwif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 210.

⁸ Cf. Al-Taftāzānī, p. 216.

after death⁹. So, Ṣabrī maintains that the opinion of *muḥaqqiqūn* contains necessary elements that guarantee resurrection of the same personality even though another body may be created for it. This view is commonly referred to as the resurrection by "collecting the dispersed parts" or *jam' al-ajzā' al-mutafarriqah*. It postulates that the soul continues to exist after death and it returns to a body which is not necessarily the exact body of its life on earth.

It is interesting to see that Ṣabrī does not find any problem in accepting almost opposing opinions of two different schools of thought. As such, he is continuing the tradition of the later *Kalām* and approving its results without seeing any justification in re-opening those classical debates afresh, especially having in view the availability of scientific knowledge on the nature of matter, physical bodies and human anatomy.

iii. The Rejecters of Resurrection

Like the classics, Ṣabrī starts his exposition with a general remark that there are two modes of denying the resurrection: (a) to deny it both spiritually or *rūḥan* and physical or *jasadan* i.e. to deny it altogether (b) and to deny physical resurrection only i.e. while affirming the continuity of existence of spirit.¹⁰ The former view is held by the "material atheists" which he applies to modern not classical trends, while the latter view is entertained by "divine philosophers" who acknowledge the existence of God¹¹ which seems to imply chiefly the philosophers like Ibn Sīnā whom Al-Ghazālī criticized and declared *kāfir* chiefly on this particular issue in his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*.¹²

⁹ There is a saying of the Prophet p.b.u.h. in which he says that a part of human body does not perish. See: "Bāb mā bayn Nafkhatayn," in "Kitāb al-Fitan," of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad Fuād 'Abd al-Bāqī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, nd.), v. 4, pp. 2270-2271; "Bāb Yawm Yunfakh fi 'l-Sūr," in "Kitāb al-Tafsīr" of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Dr. Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Bughā (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987), v. 4, p. 1881.

¹⁰ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 209.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See: ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1972), p. 283-303. Cf. "Refutation of their Denial of the Resurrection of Bodies," in *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. Sabih Ahmad Kamali (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963), pp. 229-248.

As far as method of denying the resurrection is concerned, Ṣabrī observes two: (a) methods of classics which he seems to be familiar with and (b) method of modern opponents which he discusses rather briefly.¹³

a) The Classical Method

Ṣabrī does not discuss all classical arguments against the possibility of physical resurrection; he rather selects what he considers as the stronger arguments.¹⁴ The logic behind this selection is that if he can dismiss their strongest arguments then naturally there should be no problem in dismissing the weaker ones. What he discusses is a central philosophical argument against physical resurrection: if the risen body is the exact initial body, then "it implies that the initial body has preceded itself" i.e. *taqaddum al-shay'*; *a'nī: al-mubtada'*, '*alā nafsih*'; *a'nī: al-ma'ād*.¹⁵ The precedence that he means is the impossible precedence or *al-taqaddum al-muḥāl* of the circularity *al-dawr*. This paradoxically means that a thing can exist before its existence. Ṣabrī responds that this logical principle i.e. *taqaddum al-shay'* '*alā nafsih*' is accepted, but it cannot be applied on the case of resurrection. Even if applied, it only means that a human in his twenties is preceding himself in his forties, which is not a problem at all; because although it is one and the same person, yet the age is different i.e. his youth and his maturity. But, according to Ṣabrī, they reject this contra argument because non-existence *al-'adam* has come between the previous and the latter, i.e. between body in this life, then the death, and then the body in the next life. That non-existence is not present between the age of twenties and forties in ordinary human life. In response, Ṣabrī argues that if *taqaddum* and *ta'akhkhub* can come between a thing and itself then there is no obstacle for non-existence to come in-between in the case of life, death and resurrection as well. He, therefore, explicitly rejects that non-existence —which

¹³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 211.

¹⁴ For other arguments against resurrection, see: Al-Taftāzānī. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, v. 5, p. 88-97.

¹⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 212. Cf. Aḥmad Muḥammad Jadd, "Al-Ma'ād fi 'l-Khiṭāb al-Falsafī al-Mu'āṣir fi Miṣr," in *Annual Journal of International Islamic University Islamabad*, Issue No. 10. (2002), p. 173.

occurs between the previous and the latter— has anything to do with the possibility and impossibility of resurrecting a body again.¹⁶

Secondly, the opponents of physical resurrection argue that the second body is not identical to the first body. Şabrî responds that no part of body should be preserved in order to reconstruct the body from it, like the *muḥaqqiqūn* argue. He also rejects the solution of *Mu'tazilah* in which things exist in non-existence. He contends that God's knowledge is enough to reconstruct the same body.¹⁷ His view, apart from being classical, is also appealing to the modern mind which believes that a correct formula can reconstruct anything that has existed then ceased to exist.

Şabrî strongly argues that a resurrected body does not need to be absolutely identical with the previous body from every aspect because even a body in this life is not the same in different ages although same identity and oneness of person is not disputed. Therefore, he opines that the exactness of body is required to the extent that it is correct to predicate it as "it is it" or *hwwa hwwa*.¹⁸ It does not need to be exactly the same from every aspect; it requires the unity of essence or *ittiḥād al-dhāt* only.

Finally, Şabrî explicitly criticizes *muḥaqqiqūn* for having committed an error in prohibiting resurrection of the same body using the arguments discussed above. He further supports his evidence by giving two interesting examples specifically related to the problem of the *taqaddum* and *ta'akhkhub*:

a) The movement of the hand causes the movement of the ring on it, so, the movement of the ring is dependent on the movement of the hand. To state that the movement of the hand is dependent on the movement of the ring is circularity or *al-dawr*. This implies precedence of effect over its cause which is obviously contradictory. Similarly, there is no *taqaddum* or precedence in having person X in the next life over the same person in this life. There is no contradiction in that

¹⁶ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 212.

¹⁷ See: *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 213.

because that person in the next life has not been caused by the person from this life; as a young man is not the cause for the existence of the mature man. God is making them *muqaddam* and *mua'akhhbar* and their time and place are different which, according to the standard manuals of logic, does not allow contradiction to take place.¹⁹

b) It is correct to say that "hen comes out of egg and that egg comes out of hen". However, it is not correct to point to a particular hen and say that it laid this egg and then point to the same hen and say that it came out of the same egg. This is obvious circularity. And there is nothing of that sort in *al-taqaddum* and *al-ta'akhhur* related to resurrection.²⁰

The fact that Şabrî does not go into details of traditionally important issues in the chapter on resurrection as well as the fact that he chooses only what seems to enjoy permanent significance in philosophy at large indicates that he feels the pulse of his time. This discredits accusations that he digs himself in classical issues without regard to the modern challenges.

b) The Modern Method

Şabrî firmly maintains that the modern method, and he primarily means the scientific inquiry based on sensual experiment, cannot deny resurrection in principle.²¹ According to him, the argument that scientific community did not record any case of resurrection till now, and that —based on that— they do not think that resurrection can ever take place is incorrect.²² The fallacy in their argument, as he explains, is that they might have examined past experiences and they did not find any example of resurrection, but they did not examine future experiences in which resurrection is supposed to take place. Therefore, they cannot deny resurrection in future because their evidence supports their claim only regarding the past, while resurrection is promised and talked about in sacred

¹⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 215.

²⁰ See: Ibid.

²¹ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 211.

²² See: Ibid.

scriptures in future. If they could study future experience only then they could claim to have studied it scientifically according to the rigorous rules of scientific inquiry that they so often radically apply on religion.²³ Applying this sort of arguments seems as if Ṣabrī is taking revenge from scientists who mistreated religion in a similar way. This might be justified keeping in view the hostile atmosphere in which Ṣabrī engaged but still it might have obscured some positive aspects that he failed to perceive.

An opinion that particularly interests Ṣabrī in this regard is that of Farīd Wajdi who denied resurrection in public exchange of articles with Ṣabrī on the pages of Egyptian daily newspaper, Al-Ahrām but who, paradoxically, later on became the chief editor of the official journal of the chief Sunni seat of learning, Al-Azhar and considerably softened his position.²⁴ Ṣabrī attributes this gradual change in Wajdi's views to the phenomenon of Western spiritualists who acknowledge the existence of soul and not to some past or contemporary Islamic influences.²⁵ They claim to have proven the existence of souls by what they call scientific experiments. On the basis of those claims, Wajdi seems to develop an argument for the existence of afterlife, the summary of which is that the existence of soul is necessarily an eternal existence. Furthermore, to accommodate the eternal existence there must be another world in which the soul will continue its life.²⁶ In response to that, Ṣabrī strongly argues that the existence of soul cannot be proved by scientific means because it belongs to the metaphysical realm for which science does not possess explorative tools. But, given that it is true, mere existence of soul does not necessarily imply its eternity, and eternal soul does not necessarily imply the existence of the other world,²⁷ so, it does not provide a sound grounding for rational permission for the possibility of resurrection. In addition to that, Ṣabrī does not see any significance in Wajdi's attempt for the simple reason that he does

²³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, pp. 211-212.

²⁴ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 209.

²⁵ See: *Ibid.*

²⁶ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, pp. 216-217.

²⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 217.

not consider the Qur'ān to be clear on the resurrection because, as has been pointed earlier, he considers all the verses which mention miraculous events —such as resurrection— as *mutashābihāt*.²⁸

The significance of Şabrī's short but succinct exposition manifests in his recognition of the challenge of modern scientific method and the failure of its atheistic proponents to apply it adequately on metaphysical themes such as resurrection. No less significant is Şabrī's sharp and critical attitude towards modern Muslim attempts to incorporate scientific discoveries into what they would like to see as reinterpreted Islamic theology, and to smoothly integrate it into the modern paradigm of knowledge. In that, he is guided by the enormous Islamic intellectual heritage, clear understanding and respect of scriptural evidence and critical attitude that he developed against the modern scientific and philosophical input. Nevertheless, the unfriendly attacks of modernists against religion and Şabrī's eagerness to strongly respond to them have sometimes prevented discussion to develop into a perhaps richer discourse.

iv. Other Arguments for the Afterlife

a) Kant's Argument

As already discussed, Şabrī argues that Kant's moral argument for the existence of God bases itself on the assumption that each deed should be perfectly rewarded. That perfect reward is not possible in this world; therefore life after death must actualize so that perfect judgment takes place.²⁹ So, for that, the argument establishes the resurrection first, then the Day of Judgment and only then the existence of God who would guarantee the proper reward to every one. From here, Şabrī concludes that the moral argument is more suitable to prove the afterlife than to establish the existence of God. Hence, he suggests that the moral argument may be used as a proof for the existence of the next life.³⁰ Şabrī sounds

²⁸ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 216.

²⁹ See: Ibid.

³⁰ See: Ibid.

very cautious and he would not like to consider Kant's argument as independently valid but rather as complimentary to, not only chief arguments for resurrection as outlined in *Kalām* generally and his thought particularly, but also within the same classical paradigm of Islamic thought.

b) The Importance of Life Argument

Şabrî draws an interesting argument from the existence of life that is based on the premise that human life is extremely important, and that belief in its ultimate end in death diminishes its assumed importance. For him, to believe that life finishes with death is "to despise oneself and to despise reason with that despise".³¹ On one hand, the value of human life for Şabrî is so great that he does not want to accept that it should simply finish with death. On the other, he thinks that it is a humiliation of human reason which obviously does not want to accept such a meaningless ending.

c) Medicine for Death

Şabrî discusses the idea of some materialists that science can invent medicine for each illness including death.³² Although Şabrî believes that for each illness there is a cure, he rejects that a cure for death may be found on the following grounds: (a) great intellectuals and philanthropists of the past could not benefit from it, (b) those people who live now and die at the time of that discovery also cannot benefit from it and (c) this idea is not a source of comfort even for those who argue for such medicine and thus cannot save themselves from contempt.³³ It is clear from Şabrî's discussion that of all the arguments for the afterlife, this "mighty scientific argument" is the weakest from a rational point of view. He did not consider a possibility of inventing such a medicine but he looked at a larger perspective in

³¹ Ibid., v. 4, p. 216.

³² See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 216-217.

³³ See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 217.

which scientific solutions like this do not actually resolve profound issues of the meaning and value of life for the entire human race from its very beginning.

* * *

Through this type of presentation and analysis, Şabrî seems to be trying to incorporate the old and new and to link modern developments with traditional knowledge without disregard to its relevance even in the modern context. If he seems to be stressing more on classical discussions and less on modern issues it is perhaps because of his concern for endeavouring to make major contribution in the field of developing suitable methodology to bridge the widening gap between modern science, philosophy and religion rather than solving immediate problems in isolation from and in ignorance of a larger perspective. Therefore, it is here that his originality and innovation lie, but also his weakness because some issues that he engages with are perhaps not treated sometimes with the required depth.

Chapter IV

Separation of Religion and Politics

Separation of religion and politics or church and state has existed on and off in the history of Western civilization in one shape or the other. However, it has received more attention, serious theoretical formulation and wider implementation in the modern times.¹ That is perhaps due to the early modern notion which considers religion as an obstacle for modernization and regards secularization as a chief prerequisite for a modern state.² Sociologists treat separation of religion and politics within the rubric of social differentiation which is one of the aspects of secularization theory.³ Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī deals with it on his own terms. It can broadly be argued that he approaches it also as an aspect of secularization using both sociological and theological means of analysis, finally placing it in his distinctive framework. This, however, will be further discussed in the present chapter.

Although there was a time when separation of religion and politics was seen as a standard that should be followed in other non-Western societies by default, it has recently been recognized by many researchers as a byproduct of particular historical circumstances of a certain point of time and place and that, as such, may hardly be functional elsewhere.⁴ While the sway of separation of religion and politics was very strong, the Muslim countries were under dominion of Western

¹ Baruch Spinoza was perhaps the first modern Western thinker who intellectually advocated the liberation of philosophy from theology and separation of politics from religion. See: Hillel G. Fradkin, "The 'Separation' of Religion and Politics: The Paradoxes of Spinoza," in *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 4, Fiftieth Anniversary Issue: Religion and Politics. (Autumn, 1988), pp. 603-627.

² See: Terrance G. Carroll, "Secularization and the States of Modernity," in *World Politics* Vol. 36, No. 3 (The Johns Hopkins University Press; April, 1984), p. 362.

³ See: Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁴ See: David A. Martin, *The Religious and Secular: Studies in Secularization* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969) and *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978). For a simple presentation of his view, see: Olivier Tschanen. "The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization," in *The Journal of Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Dec., 1991), p. 399.

powers. Some leading thinkers of that time like Farah Anṭūn,⁵ Muḥammad Farīd Wajdi,⁶ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal⁷ and 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq,⁸ with whose contributions Ṣabīrī was critically engaged, saw in the separation a solution for Muslim decadence and stagnation. The first official and complete separation of religion and politics was implemented in Turkey which happened to be a leading Muslim country of the time.⁹ Its example was partially followed by other Muslim countries under the guidance of the imperialist powers. It is interesting to note however, that this process started off in the Muslim countries almost a century and a half after some European countries and the United States implemented it officially.¹⁰ But as Bryan S. Turner puts it, "there is a crucial difference between Western and Turkish secularization in that the latter was imposed by political decree rather than emerging necessarily and automatically from economic change."¹¹

⁵ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, p. 162. "As separation of religion and state, secularism was first championed by Christian writers like Ya'qub Sarruf, Faris Nimr, Nicola Haddad, Salama Musa and others." See: Fauzi M. Najjar, "The debate on Islam and secularism in Egypt," in *Arab Studies Quarterly* (Spring, 1996), URL: <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2501/is_n2_v18/ai_18627295> Retrieved in December 2007.

⁶ For Ṣabīrī's criticism, see: *Mas'alat Tarjamat al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafiyyah wa Maktabatuha, h. 1351), pp. 103-106, 122. For a Turkish translation of this work, see: Süleyman Çelik, *Kur'an Tercümesi Meselesi* (İstanbul: Bedir Yayınevi, 1993). *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 368-370 and v. 4, pp. 347-348. Cf. Minshāwī 'Abd al-Rahmān Ismā'il, *Mawqif Shaykh al-Islām Muṣṭafā Ṣabīrī min al-Qaḍāyā al-Kalāmiyya wa 'l-Falsafiyyah fi 'l-'Aṣr al-Ḥadīth* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Cairo: Dār al-'Ulūm, 1990), p. 470.

⁷ *The Life of Muḥammad*, p. xxxix. For Ṣabīrī's remarks, see: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 1, pp. 162-165. For an analysis of Ṣabīrī's response, see: Minshāwī, pp. 468-470.

⁸ *Al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Ḥukm* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Miṣr, 1925). For Ṣabīrī's response to 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq see: *Mawqif al-'Aql* v. 4 pp. 358-376 and "Al-Imām al-Kubrā fi 'l-Islām" *Yarın* No. 70. (Sep. 1930). For a brief analysis of Ṣabīrī's response to 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq, see: Mufarriḥ ibn Sulaimān Al-Qawsī, *Al-Shaikh Muṣṭafā Ṣabīrī wa mawqifubū min al-Fikri al-Wāfid* (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 1997), pp. 492-511. Cf. Minshāwī, pp. 460-464.

⁹ Some authors argue that the process of secularization started even during the Tanẓimāt that were eventually topped by the separation of religion and politics in the era of Kamal Pasha. See: Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), p. 155-192.

¹⁰ David Barton argues that the phrase "separation of church and state" represents the Supreme Courts's interpretation of the Constitution. See: *The Myth of Separation* (Texas: Wellbuilder Press, 1992).

¹¹ *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 163-164.

It is widely maintained that the separation of religion and politics in the West had pre-modern practical examples and reasonable theoretical potential inbuilt in Christianity. But it certainly did not have any realized precedent in the history of Islam, nor did Islam contain any theoretical prospective from which a supportive intellectual discourse could emerge.¹² The 1923 decision to take the political power from the office of the caliph and to keep him only as a religious figure was the first such case in Islamic history. A year later, however, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished the caliphate altogether and announced the secular republic of Turkey. The reactions were mixed; the intellectual élites supported such a move while the traditional scholars rejected it.

Şabrî's engagement with this issue therefore, should be placed in the aforementioned context. In addition to that, his long involvement in the political and religious arena of the highest degree gave him a chance to be at the heart of events during the long processes that eventually led to the separation of religion and politics in Turkey. This experience has significantly enriched his intellectual discourse having provided him with many details and insights that he would not have otherwise had. He differs therefore, from many theoreticians like 'Abd al-Rāziq—for instance—who did not have this kind of opportunity and who were only reflecting on the aftermath of the proclamation of the Turkish republic.¹³ Secondly, since there is no precedent of this subject in classical Islamic writings, Şabrî could not call on traditional authorities. Hence, it is expected that his views will involve a lot of creative Islamic reasoning. Thirdly, his contribution comes well in time as one of the earliest modern Islamic intellectual contribution to the issue of separation of religion and politics. Fourthly, given his stature, influence and authority among other scholars and his accomplishment and recognition as a

¹² See for example: Joseph R. Strayer, "The State and Religion: An Exploratory Comparison in Different Cultures: Greece and Rome, the West, Islam," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 1, No. 1. (Oct., 1958), pp. 38-43.

¹³ 'Abd al-Rāziq withdrew from positions that he held in his famous book but a lot of damage had already been done by that time. See: Muḥammad al-Bahīyy, *Al-Fikr al-Islāmī al-Ḥadīth wa Ṣilatuh bi 'l-Isti'mār al-Gharbī* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1975), p. 232. Şabrî however, appreciates him for amending his position and talking about it openly. See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 376.

traditional scholar and the soundness of his argument, his deliberations — particularly in this field— might strongly be considered as an authentic Islamic contribution.

Şabrî is also considered as one of the earliest figures who wrote about the events, changes and reforms that eventually led to the abolition of caliphate, establishment of modern Turkey and separation of religion from politics. Although extremely significant for historians and sociologists yet it does not fall into the scope of the present study. What is more interesting here is his theoretical input in this regard.

Being aware that this kind of subject has never been discussed in the past, and understanding the nature of Islam which tends to cover all aspect of life, Şabrî expresses his surprise and astonishment that a time has come to discuss this particular aspect of separation of religion and politics even in the Islamic context which, he assumes, does not contain any theoretical basis for that.¹⁴ Therefore, this kind of development in the history of Islamic thought could have never naturally evolved, and to him, this was one of the many proofs of how Muslims uncritically imported ready-made solutions from the West and how they imposed them harshly on contemporary realities in Islam.

What is actually meant by separation of religion from politics? Şabrî presents the version of its proponents, such as Haykal, who suggest that it signifies "taking care of each one of them independently".¹⁵ It does not connote only that religion should not interfere in politics but it also indicates that politics should not interfere in religion. Each one of them should be separate from the other. However, broadly speaking, it does not appeal to Şabrî due to at least two reasons; one is that Islam unlike Christianity covers all spheres of life and the other is that

¹⁴ Muşafâ Şabrî, *Al-Nakîr 'alâ Munkir al-Nîmah min al-Dîn wa 'l-Khilāfah wa 'l-Ummah*. Published under new title as: *Al-Asrār al-Khafîyyah warā' Ilghā' al-Khilāfah al-'Uthmāniyyah*. Edited and introduced by Dr. Muşafâ Hilmî 2nd ed. (Alexandria: Dār al-Da'wah, 1989/1409).

¹⁵ See: *The Life of Muḥammad*, p. xxxix. For Şabrî's quotation, see: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 281.

the modern Turkish and Egyptian experiences¹⁶ prove that it is impossible to expect that politics will not interfere in religion. Şabrî sarcastically remarks that in the best possible scenario, "religion will be under protection of the government like Egypt has been under the protection of the British".¹⁷

Şabrî also talks about what sociologists of religion call differentiation, namely, if politics will rule over a certain domain, religion will not rule over it but it will rule over some other domain where politics is not supposed to have any influence. So, neither politics will interfere with religion nor will religion interfere with politics. Hence, religion and politics will represent two distinct poles that will eventually lead to the fragmentation of society. Moreover, it implies that religious scholars would not be given the opportunity to participate in political activities.¹⁸

Therefore, for Şabrî, *al-faşl* or separation is a misleading term. Theoretically and in reality it represents removing of religion from taking part in decision-making processes in the government.¹⁹ In other words, he maintains that the government *abandons* religion and relies on reason alone. Speaking in religious terms, removing religion from government is an extremely dangerous concept and Şabrî analyzes it from two significant perspectives. One is that if a Muslim individual abandons his religion, he will be called *al-murtad* or apostate. Similarly if *al-jamā'ah* or a group of individuals abandon their religion they will also be considered apostates.²⁰ Of course, this applies only if that group of people does it willingly, not if it is imposed on them. The second is that separation implies that reason should make independent decisions without support of revelation. Sociologists call this phenomenon as the process of rationalization. In Şabrî's understanding rationalization starts on a higher level of thinking and contemplating about the existence of God and once His existence is acknowledged

¹⁶ For an interesting analysis of judiciary and ethical changes as a part of secularization process particularly in Egypt but which is also beneficial for Turkey in the 19th and beginning of 20th centuries, see: Talal Asad "Reconfigurations of Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt," in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 205-256.

¹⁷ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 293.

¹⁸ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 294.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 162-163.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 281.

and accepted, His instructions that are disclosed in revelation become an integrated part of that rationalization.²¹ In other words, although reason is sufficient to prove the existence of God, yet it cannot act independently in matters of law and conduct. It must be supported by revelation.

From the sociological point of view, Şabrî argues that the situation gets further complicated by the fact that the Muslim society is a religious society, so its government —especially the parliamentary democracy— should represent its people and be a religious government. By separating religion from politics in the government, the fact is that the Muslim society is not properly represented. What eventually follows is that religion is not only separated from the government but it is also separated from the *Ummah*. If the government is chosen by people, and the government chooses separation, it does so on behalf of people.²² But the people in the Muslim societies do not want to separate their religion from politics; they want to be ruled by Islamic principles. The paradox then becomes inevitable.

This situation, when separation is implemented in a government but still rejected by people, Şabrî describes in interesting terms; “government’s revolution against people.”²³ He contrasts it to the modern Western understanding of history and perhaps the Marxist philosophy in which the proletariat revolts against the bourgeoisie. He wants to uncover the obvious absurdity i.e. while the Western people gain their freedom through revolutions; Muslim peoples get oppression by their governments who, ironically, claim to emulate Western models.

In order to highlight the danger of separation of religion and politics in Islam, Şabrî compares the secular government and the foreign government in the Muslim land. The significance of this comparison manifests in the fact that most of the Muslim world at that time was under foreign occupation and that nothing worse than that could have been imagined especially after the Muslims supremacy in the world for so many centuries. But, paradoxically again, Şabrî argues that with

²¹ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 292.

²² See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 289.

²³ *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 281.

regard to separation, a domestic secular government is worse than a foreign government. His reasons for that are basically two: (a) that foreign government does not interfere in religious matters of people; rather it refers them to locals. On the other hand, secular government is considered to be from the *Ummah* and by the passage of time, the *Ummah* will abandon its religion also.²⁴ (b) The position of the *Ummah* is not the same against the foreign government which bases its authority on its power and thus imposes its rules the way it likes while a secular government supposedly draws its authority from the power of the people themselves and works as if it was endorsed by the people,²⁵ damaging its religious identity.

Thus in Şabrî's analysis, a secular government and a religious society cannot coexist in Islam because the government would enforce its principles which would inevitably clash with Islamic teachings. The secular government will thus prevail because it has the authority and power that it supposedly draws from the people. This is also clear from Şabrî's response to Shaykh al-Azhar Al-Marāghī who argues that "any Islamic government can abandon its religion but it does not mean that people will abandon their religion as in the case of Turkey".²⁶ Şabrî argues that Al-Marāghī, by giving such a statement, is actually preparing the ground for a similar separation in Egypt as well. Furthermore, it implies that religion is necessary for people only and not for the government, which is, of course, not acceptable in the Islamic context. His remark is significant also because majority of common people were poor while the individuals in the government were the so called élites educated in the West or impressed by European culture. Şabrî also points to an important aspect of separation which is that the secular government will bring up a new generation of citizens which cannot be classified in any category; namely, they will not be Jews, Christians, Muslims nor any other known group. They will be an

²⁴ Ibid., v. 4, p. 284.

²⁵ Ibid., v. 4, pp. 284-285.

²⁶ Ibid., v. 4, p. 285.

unknown and indefinable class.²⁷ In this analysis, Şabrî seems to forecast eventual weakening and perhaps even disappearance of religion under a strict secular regime. This has been a common understanding of early sociologists of religion as well, but their expectations have not materialized because religion —especially in the West— has found other forms to express itself.²⁸ Şabrî's main concern seems to be a correct understanding of religion; if religion is going to undergo all these changes that were taking place in the Muslim world, then, there is a need to sustain —at least— a correct understanding of what Islam is even if it might not be applied in a particular situation due to overwhelming circumstances.

Two points however, must be clarified here. (a) Şabrî does not declare Muslim society which is under secular rule as apostate because that rule is imposed on them; it is not by their will.²⁹ If it is by their will they would be apostates as well. (b) Although the formulation of separation endangers Islam and misrepresents the Muslim peoples, he does not approve that these secular governments should be changed by violent means.³⁰ He therefore, differs from some modern Islamic ideologies which declare Muslim societies un-Islamic like the *Hijrah wa 'l-Takfir* movement and some others who call for overthrowing the governments by violent means.

However, for Şabrî, the issue of separation of religion and politics has a much broader perspective in Islam. Islam is a religion that is not confined to contemplation and worship but a religion which encompasses all departments of human life and which regulates human, social and political activities. Moreover, as it is applied in the life of individuals, so it is applied in the life of community and

²⁷ Ibid., v. 4, p. 287.

²⁸ This phenomenon has led many sociologists to criticize the secularization thesis itself. See for instance: Darren E. Sherkat and Christofer G. Errison, "Recent Developments and Current Controversies in Sociology of Religion," in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 25 (Annual Reviews, 1999), pp. 363-394.

²⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 284.

³⁰ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 290. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey declared Şabrî as *persona non grata* along with other 149 influential persons of the Ottoman sympathizers on April 23, 1924 (revised on June 1, 1924), was included in the Treaty of Lausanne. See: Kâmil Erdeha, "Yüzellilikler," in *Sosyalist Kültür Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: May Yayınları, 1979), vol. 8, pp. 1336-1341.

state, and separating it from them would be obliterating an important aspect of Islam in that regard. He, therefore, does not only reject orientalist's claims that the Islamic law has been borrowed from the Roman law³¹ but he also criticizes the view of Al-Marāghī that *al-Fiqh* does not belong to *al-dīn*.³² It would also imply that God knows the interest of individual but that He does not know the interest of groups.³³ In Ṣabrī's view, therefore, separating religion from politics is a test of faith not only for a Muslim individual but also for the Muslim community. He argues that it really examines genuine faith in the existence of God, in the authenticity of revelation and the claims of prophets who are not mere geniuses but true messengers of God. Last but not the least is that it also tests the believer's conviction in the life to come. In short, separation of religion and politics tests the chief articles of faith in the Islamic context. He maintains that if these articles of faith are true and if they can be demonstrated by rational arguments and scientific evidence then there is no reason not to adopt them.³⁴ Overall, it is a sign of weakness that is—in principle—contradicting the faith.³⁵ In such cases, Ṣabrī suggests that belief in the existence of God should be revised, the existence of prophets explained again and the possibility of resurrection reaffirmed, for without that, there is no point in addressing the issue of separation of religion and politics directly. Finally, Ṣabrī considers the separation of religion and politics in the Muslim world as one of the most dangerous Western conspiracies against Islam.³⁶ Due to this, he holds that those who promote separation in the Muslim world either harbour atheism or are not aware of its meaning.³⁷

³¹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, pp. 296-307. Cf. Al-Qawsī: *Al-Shaykh Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī wa mawqifuhū min al-Fikr al-Wāfīd*, pp. 520-526.

³² See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4 pp. 307-320. Ṣabrī also discusses three other allegations against Islamic law (a) that application of Islamic law will place religious scholars in a prestigious position (b) that its application of Islamic law will make the life of non-Muslim minorities unbearable and (c) that it is incompatible with the modern world. Cf. Al-Qawsī, pp. 526-527, 527-529 and 529-532 respectively.

³³ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, pp. 294-295. For an analysis of Ṣabrī's response to Al-Marāghī, see: Minshāwī, *Mawqif Shaykh al-Islām Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī*, pp. 465-468.

³⁴ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 288.

³⁵ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 294.

³⁶ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 281.

³⁷ See: *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 294.

Interestingly enough, Ṣabrī considers intellectual work of no use if it is not going to be implemented in practical life. Books are published and read by individuals, which is important yet not sufficient. Another one is that a committee that takes care of Muslim affairs will read and implement them. That committee, in his view, is a government which is supposed to look into the interest of Muslim life.³⁸ He thus exhibits the characteristics of classical Muslim scholars who engage intellectually in order to bring about changes practically.

In a unique attempt, Ṣabrī places the subject of separation of religion and politics in a *Kalāmī* paradigm under the heading of *Naṣb al-Imām* electing a leader, who is supposed to implement the articles of faith and injunctions of *al-Sharī'ah* or religious law.³⁹ This heading is found in all later books of *Kalām* and it comes after the chapters on three main divisions namely, God, Prophethood and Afterlife.⁴⁰ Placing it in this kind of paradigm Ṣabrī wants to ensure both the continuity of Islamic intellectual tradition and its adaptability to the modern challenges.

Similarly, the famous subject that busied the minds of modern Muslim thinkers i.e. *al-iṣlāḥ* reformation is solved with these significant remarks. The role of the Muslim intellectuals is to make suggestions while the governments will try to implement them. Although Ṣabrī recognizes that the reformation of Muslim societies can start from individuals, he argues that the only proper way to implement them is through elected representatives of the community.⁴¹ Therefore, religion does not stand in the way of *al-iṣlāḥ*, *al-iṣlāḥ* as being perhaps the Islamic equivalent for the Western term of modernization (if modernization may be understood without the connotation of westernization) but it seems the only acceptable option of doing it. Hence, contrary to the understanding of the modernists, Ṣabrī does not consider Islam as an obstacle for modernization but as its chief vehicle. Significantly, he also does not support the view that the modern

³⁸ See: Ibid., v. 4, pp. 289-290.

³⁹ See: Ibid., v. 4, p. 286, footnote no. 1.

⁴⁰ See: Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, v. 5, pp. 232-320. *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-Nasafiyyah* ed. Ahmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1988), pp. 96-102. Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, pp. 395-414. al-Bayjūrī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Imām al-Bayjūrī 'alā jawharat al-tawḥid*, 325-327.

⁴¹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 4, p. 290.

state should distance itself from religion due to both theological and sociological reasons.

Chapter V

The Problem of Evil, Predetermination and Muslim Decadence

While the modern times associate Westerners with renaissance, enlightenment, freedom, development, progress, better life, victory, confidence and honour, the Muslims seem to suffer from all the opposites namely; slumber, darkness, oppression, backwardness, regress, poverty, defeat, doubt and humiliation. Continuous defeats in different fields made Muslims realize the growing dominance of the West on one hand and increasing awareness of their own weakness on the other. The Muslims' emerging understanding of their own position creates a dilemma in their minds from two perspectives: (a) the scale of defeat was unprecedented and there seems to be no hope for quick recovery, (b) Islamic teachings do not promise Muslims to be dominated by anyone else as long as they are Muslims. Subsequently, this dilemma engages Muslim intellectuals to search for causes of such miserable situation and suggestions for its solution¹ Thus, the classic issues of the problem of evil and predestination re-emerge in modern Islamic discourse under the aforementioned circumstances because the former tend to explain the existence of evil, a part of which was happening to the Muslims in the form of decadence, while the latter represents a response to the Western accusation that Islamic beliefs —and the belief in predestination in particular— make Muslims ignorant and lazy and that is how their backwardness may be

¹ Over the decades some of these writings became very popular among the intellectuals and Muslim masses: Shakīb Aṣṣalān, *Limādhā Ta'akhhur al-Muslimūn wa Limādhā Taqaddama Ghayrūhum* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, nd.); Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadawī, *Madhā Khasira al-'Ālam bi Inḥiṭāṭ al-Muslimīn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Imān, nd.); Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Sirr Ta'akhhur al-'Arab wa 'l-Muslimīn* (Cairo: Nahḍat Miṣr, 2005). Thus it appears as one of the problems of modern Islamic thought, see: Ḥāmid Ṭāhir, *Al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah fī 'l-'Aṣr al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Matba'at al-'Umrāniyyah, 1991), pp. 143-148.

explained.² The accusation was so intense that in Şabrî's view it occupies the second position after the accusation that Islam does not treat the women properly.³ What complicates the matters even more is that the Islamic paradigm is exposed to the challenge of the modern Western understanding that triggers revision and a search for solutions outside the traditional norms which in turn creates not only different but also opposing views among Muslim intellectuals. It is a custom to classify these responses into reformists, modernists and traditionalists. This kind of classifications turns into a mere labelling which often blurs the whole picture, and therefore will not be employed here as such. This kind of classification may be helpful but it should not be decisive.

The problem of evil in Christian thought particularly and the West generally has been used historically and in the modern times as an argument against the existence of God, who in their view is All-Good, All-Powerful and All-Knowledgeable; and that contradicts with the existence of evil in the world. Had He been truly like that, He would have never allowed evil to exist. Since evil exists, God, who has those perfect attributed of goodness, knowledge and power, does not exist.⁴ For Şabrî, this formulation of the problem is objectionable and the situation of this issue in this position totally wrong. However, the problem of evil is a relevant topic to him and deserves an important place in the modern intellectual discourse; both in the West and in the East.⁵ More will be discussed about this issue shortly but we may continue to examine some more particular points about the problem of evil from Şabrî's perspective.

Şabrî does not devote a special chapter or a section to this problem. That is why the problem must be approached carefully keeping in view the totality of his thought. He seems to approach the problem of evil as has been commonly done by most of the thinkers who struggled with this issue. Hence, there are two aspects of

² See: *Marwqif al-Bashar tahta Sultân al-Qadar* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafiyyah wa Maktabatuha, 1352 A. H.), p. 22.

³ See: *Marwqif al-Bashar*, p. 22.

⁴ See: H. J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," in *Journal of Bible and Religion*, Vol. 30 No. 3 (Jul., 1962), p. 187.

⁵ See: *Marwqif al-Bashar*, p. 436.

it, namely, the physical and the ethical. The former is related to the nature of the world while the latter pertains to the moral issues that the existence of evil implies.

When dealing with the nature of the world, Şabrî particularly focuses on a controversial issue in the modern West namely, the idea of “the best of all worlds” that has been optimistically suggested by Leibnitz.⁶ Şabrî translates it as *laysa fi 'l-imkān abda' mimma kān* which has its classic connotations, and before even discussing it, openly dissociates himself from it. Although his way of dealing with it shows his competence yet at the same time he fails to mention the famous response of Voltaire.⁷ The only excuse not to mention it is, perhaps, that Voltaire's reaction was too pessimistic and unbalanced for Şabrî's own point of view.

The controversy about “the best of all possible worlds” is not an innovation of Leibnitz; it has been discussed much earlier in the Middle Ages, sometimes with different connotation.⁸ But it has been suggested as a solution to the problem of evil at those times and in the modern age. Some of Şabrî's contemporaries argued that even Al-Ghazālî held such a view⁹, but the way Şabrî mentions that option surely shows that he was very careful not to associate this idea with Al-Ghazālî and support the notion that he held Leibnitz's view.¹⁰

Şabrî rejects the idea that the world in which we are living is the best possible world. He mentions three objections against it although many others may be deduced from his general thought. His direct response is blunt and effective while his indirect response may be qualified as deep and constructive.

⁶ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 437. See also: G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Weakness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951).

⁷ Voltaire responded in his celebrated satiric novel *Candide* (1759). He ridicules the idea that this is the best possible world and if it is the creation of God then He does not deserve to be worshipped and adored.

⁸ For a comprehensive overview of this debate see: Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over al-Ghazālî's "Best of all Possible Worlds"* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁹ See: *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. (Samaragh: Maktabah wa Maṭba'ah, nd.), v. 4, p. 252. Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'î criticizes Al-Ghazālî in his *Tabdīm al-Arkān min Lays fi 'l-Imkān Abda' mimma Kān*. While Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭî defends Al-Ghazālî in his *Kitāb Tashyīd al-Arkān fi Lays fi 'l-Imkān Abda' mimma Kān* (Ḥalab: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1998).

¹⁰ See: *Marwqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 438.

Firstly, Şabrî argues that the notion that this is the best possible world contradicts with the well established concept in both Christian and Islamic theology that God acts freely. The *Mu'tazilî* assumption that *laysa li al-jawād bukhla wa lā fi al-qudrati nuqṣān*¹¹ implies that God is compelled to create the best possible world. Furthermore, Şabrî affirms God's free will, full power and perfect creation but that does not necessitate the best possible creation in all instances. Accordingly, He can create what is not the best one because He has the freedom to do so.

Secondly, and in continuation of the first point and its explanation but not rationally or theologically but from direct scriptural evidence, Şabrî argues that explicit statements point that God could have done certain things in other ways only if He willed so: "if Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people;"¹² "if thy Lord had so planned, they would not have done it;"¹³ etc.

Thirdly, according to the traditional usage in *Kalām*, the order in the world is not used to prove the existence of God but it is only used to prove the attributes of God.¹⁴ Therefore, Şabrî rules out the connection between the existence of God and the existence of the evil in the world. To him, the physical evil or the flaws in the structure of the world cannot be used against the existence of God in Islamic context as it is the case in the West. He argues that a better world is possible in respect of God's power but the present world which is not perfect certainly requires no less than God to create it.¹⁵

The other aspect of the problem of evil as has been mentioned is the ethical one. Şabrî quotes Al-'Aqqād who summarized Western views in this regard.¹⁶ According to it, the existence of evil, pain and injustice is considered against the existence of God in general and the teleological argument in particular. Following Al-'Aqqād's exposition and comparison between the world as conceptualized by

¹¹ *Marwif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 438, footnote no. 1. See also: *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, v. 4, p. 252.

¹² The Qur'ān: *Al-Mā'idah*, 48.

¹³ The Qur'ān: *Al-An'am*, 112.

¹⁴ See: *Marwif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 438.

¹⁵ See: *Ibid.*

¹⁶ See: *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 436. See: Maḥmūd 'Abbās Al-'Aqqād, *Allāh in Maḥsū'at Maḥmūd 'Abbās Al-'Aqqād al-Islāmiyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1970), pp. 243-247.

those who view the problem of evil as an obstacle for the existence of God and the world as it really exists, Şabrî also points to the irreconcilable contradiction between the two. To both Al-'Aqqād and Şabrî their objections seem unrealistic. This coincides as evidence that the problem of evil is relevant but that it should not be placed against the teleological proof. Elaborating the point, Şabrî holds that teleology aims to prove the existence of ends and will in the world irrespective of their nature, namely good or evil. He maintains that unlike Christianity, in Islam everything in this world has been created by God, good or evil, and since nothing can happen without His will, good and evil are the results of His will.¹⁷ Traditionally, the *Mutakallimūn* have divided God's will into *al-Irādah al-Kawniyyah* or cosmological will and *al-Irādah al-Dīniyyah* or the religious will and Şabrî follows it. However, he points that *Mu'tazilah* have another opinion. The gist of it is that evil is not related to God's will. The difference between the two positions has been explained in the books of *Kalām* and some of the details Şabrî also discusses in his *Mawqif al-Bashar taḥta Sulṭān al-Qadar*.¹⁸ Some relevant details will be mentioned shortly.

Lastly, Şabrî argues that the idea of *wujūb al-aṣḥab* may also be discussed in the problem of evil but again it should not be brought against the teleological proof.¹⁹ The problem with it is not that God does not care for His creatures but that it is not necessary for Him to choose the best for them in every situation.²⁰

It is clear that Şabrî's first concern is to place the problem of evil in an Islamic context. He recognizes the differences between the Western and Islamic traditions in this regard but he does not agree that one paradigm should be imposed over the other. The problem may be treated therefore in two different paradigms. Although in his discussion he is responsive yet he manages to chalk his own way. He emphasizes that the classic books are still good sources for solving the problem of evil. However, his main concern in this issue does not seem to give an

¹⁷ *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 436.

¹⁸ See: pp. 47-63.

¹⁹ See: *Mawqif al-'Aql*, v. 2, p. 436.

²⁰ See: *Ibid*.

exhaustive and detailed account—as in some other issues— but rather a correct placing of the problem in a particular paradigm and its treatment in relation to certain important elements that are closely related to it.

The problem of evil in religious context, some way or the other, leads to another important issue; namely, the existence of Satan. Islam explains that the role of Satan is to invite people to disobedience, sin and other vices which Islam generally terms as ignorance. Combined together, these transgressions create a range of problems that can seriously effect individual life and fatally undermine any society and people. The Muslim reality of the modern age seems to be abundant with serious problems that eventually led to the downfall of their empire. This simplistic religious explanation comes under attack and the question of the existence of Satan itself emerges. As the existence of God, prophets and resurrection becomes problematic in the modern discourse, so does the existence of Satan, because Satan belongs to the group of same metaphysical realities. Therefore, the nature of objections that were applied against the tripartite principles of religion automatically implies the objections against the existence of Satan. And this was really so, but Şabrî's reaction was not triggered so much by these problems as it has been by the fact that Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1893-1963), an important religious figure during Şabrî's life, and *Shaykh al-Azhar* (1958-1963) after his death, raised objections against the existence of Satan.

Şabrî picks up Shaltūt's interpretation of the verse 117 of al-Nisā': *They call but upon Satan the persistence rebel*. Shaltūt explains:

The meaning of Satan is disposition of evil spread in the world according to the laws of God in tempting by the causes of good and evil. They, therefore, follow a hidden power which is referred to by the word Satan to keep up with the customs of Arabs who imagined the power of evil as satans which talk, whisper, tempt and push for what they want.²¹

Şabrî summarizes, explains and criticizes objections that Shaltūt raised. According to Şabrî, the first argument that Shaltūt holds on is that although the

²¹ Ibid., v. 1, pp. 360-361.

word Satan is repeatedly found in the Qur'ān, yet his true nature or *kunh* is not explained nor is it known to us. Şabrî's contention is profound; he argues that we do not need to grasp the essence of a thing in order to recognize its existence. As has already been mentioned in previous chapters, he also argues this about God; that perception of His true nature is not a precondition for recognition of His existence.

Secondly, Shaltût argues that the Qur'ān merely accommodates the pagan superstitions keeping up with their customs and traditions but does not mean to approve the existence of Satan as an existing entity.²² For Şabrî, this statement is so outrageous that he rejects it right away. He, however, does not explain why he does so perhaps because of the view that the implications of this idea are so obvious to everyone. The reason behind such a straightforward objection is that in that case the Qur'ān would have been guided by the superstitions of the pagans rather than affirmation of truth.

Thirdly, Shaltût attempts to justify his position by what seems to be a similar position of Al-Ghazālî. It is attributed to him that he also denied the existence of Satan.²³ However, Şabrî rejects this allegation on two accounts: (a) there is obvious difference between what Al-Ghazālî wants to convey and what Şhltût wants to say. The former talks in allegorical terms, while the latter negates the existence of Satan. (b) Even if accepted that Al-Ghazālî's intention was to deny the existence of Satan, Şabrî elaborates, Shaltût should know that his statement cannot abrogate the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. In addition, Şabrî is of the opinion that Shaltût was not guided by Al-Ghazālî's view but rather that he was adjusting to the prevailing circumstances in the modern age.²⁴

Discussing the same problem but from a different angle, Şabrî strongly argues that the existence of Satan cannot be denied because he is mentioned in numerous verses in the Qur'ān. Denying those verses would be denying the

²² See: Ibid.

²³ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 360.

²⁴ See: Ibid., v. 1, p. 361.

Qur'ān. Secondly, he points that these verses depict Satan as a person who is "alive, talks, sees, becomes arrogant, argues, swears and procreates; who is expelled, stoned and punished in hell".²⁵ Interestingly enough, Ṣabrī also emphasizes that Satan is stoned in one of the rituals of the *Hajj* without explaining actually how that proves his point.²⁶

Ṣabrī tells us also about a personal encounter between Shaltūt and him when Shaltūt verbally told him that he "does not deny the existence of Satan, how could I deny the existence of Iblīs".²⁷ To Ṣabrī this statement contradicts Shaltūt's interpretation of the abovementioned verse. He understands it as an attempt to reinterpret his first position; an attempt which is impossible due to two points. One is that it seems as if Shaltūt spoke of some other Satan; not this one that he denied. And the second one is that although Ṣabrī accepts that the word Satan may have a metaphorical meaning as in the famous verse, but he rules out that the metaphorical meaning was Shaltūt's intention in the first place, especially because he ran for cover under the authority of Al-Ghazālī in order to justify his position.

On the other hand, and in continuation of the problem of evil, the belief in *al-Qaḍā' wa 'l-Qadar* or predestination as the sixth pillar of Islamic creed,²⁸ becomes yet another tool to explain the cause for the Muslim decadence. This important article of faith states that "everything good or evil is from God". But even deeper than that and more complicated than the issue of good and evil is the essential part of it and that is that destiny has been preordained before everything was even created, and that God's knowledge encompasses everything before any event takes place. The theological debates about this article of faith have been carried out within the subject of, mainly, three of God's attributes, namely; Knowledge, Power and Will. But more specifically, it has been dealt under the title of *Af'āl al-'Ibād* or the actions of worshippers. The issue of predestination is among the first

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See: Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., v. 1, p. 363.

²⁸ The Prophet s.a.w.s. explains the meaning of *al-Īmān*, *al-Islām* and *al-Ihsān* in the famous *ḥadīth* of Jibrīl. See: "Bāb bayān al-Īmān wa 'l-Islām wa 'l-Ihsān," in "Kitāb al-Īmān" of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* ed. Dr. Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Bughā(Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987), p. 30.

subjects that were debated in the early Islamic community and, thus, some argue that it was crucial in the later emergence and development of *Kalām*.²⁹

The initial opinions varied. For *Al-Jabriyyah*, God's knowledge was perfect and He created everything including individual destinies. Accordingly, there was no room for human freedom and choice and there was no use for the efforts because everything has already been decided. Man was a mere feather in the wind; as it blows it changes its direction. In response, *Al-Qadariyyah* reaffirmed human freedom and responsibility for his actions and denied predestination. These two views, with their superficiality and simplicity that negated some obvious principles of Islam, initiated a debate that generated sophisticated discourse on the issue at hand and subsequently issued in full fledged schools of thought such as *Mu'tazilah*, *Al-Ashā'irah* and *Al-Māturidiyyah*. *Al-Mu'tazilah* were very influential in the beginning, but soon after they disintegrated and their views continued to survive in the Sunni manuals of *Kalām* only. Some of the leading *Sunnī* scholars like *Imām al-Haramayn* (d. 478) held their views but that was more like an exception than a rule. That, however, did not challenge the *Ashā'irah* and *Māturidiyyah* monopoly over the right to interpret the Islamic beliefs throughout the Muslim history.

Ṣabrī recognizes the efforts of *Mutakallimūn* but at the same time stresses that they could not possibly grasp the true essence of predestination.³⁰ The element of mystery and secrecy had to remain and this is how it is supposed to be. After all, the issue of predestination is a riddle that cannot be fully explained. He also thinks that it is one of the most complicated issues to discuss.³¹ This is confirmed by clear indications in the scriptural sources of Islam which point to human inability to penetrate all the mystery surrounding predestination.³² However, the issue of predestination, with its complications and implication, was settled within the two dominant *Sunnī* schools. Different views were known, but the prevailing schools

²⁹ See: Al-Shāfi'i, *Al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsāt 'Ilm al-Kalām* (Karachi: Idārat al-Qur'ān wa 'l-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah, 2001), pp. 57-60. This is clear even from the Ḥadīth that has been mentioned in the previous footnote.

³⁰ See: *Ma'wqif al-Bashar*, p. 21.

³¹ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 23.

³² See: *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

held the public opinion. Şabrî maintains that this situation continued for centuries until the modern age, when the problem re-emerged again.³³

As has been mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the circumstances under which the problem of predestination re-emerged in the modern times were not pleasing for the Muslims. Not only that their glory was lost, but they were also completely defeated. What was even worse than that was that the defeat came to be blamed not on anything else but on Islam; their religion, and in particular; their belief in predestination which was projected as fatalism. The accusation of fatalism, therefore, attempts to explain the causes of Muslims decadence by suggesting that the belief in predestination is responsible for making the Muslims lazy, idle, inactive and irresponsible. Accordingly, when this belief engulfed the Muslim world it ultimately led to its downfall and the ultimate Western victory and control.

Looking into the Western perspective, Şabrî maintains that modern man is hypnotized by his success "to fly above the clouds and dive deep in the water".³⁴ By enhancing his ability to overcome natural hurdles he believes that he is freeing himself from the bonds of predestination and taking charge of his destiny. This might have influenced modern Muslim thinkers to assume that the *Mu'tazilah's* suggestion that man creates his own deeds is correct. But that, as will be shown, does not seem correct for Şabrî.

Perhaps it is impossible to establish who propagated this idea in the first place and where was this accusation coming from. Şabrî's own conviction is that the nature of the accusation points to its source in the West. He also refers to Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī who indicates that the accusation comes from the West.³⁵ He does not go further in investigation because it suffices him to start his discussion. After all, Al-Afghani, as the father of modern Muslim thought, introduced this problem in the modern Muslim discourse with which Şabrî is so engaged.

³³ See: *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁵ See: *Mawqif al-Bashar*, p. 26. See also: *Risālah fī 'l-Qaḍā' wa 'l-Qadar* in *Al-Radd 'alā al-Dabriyyīn* (Cairo, 1914), pp. 85-96.

Furthermore, the accusation of fatalism becomes popular even among Muslim masses; so, a Muslim thinker will struggle to work out a suitable response and devise a proper solution. Şabrî remarks that "those who know something and those who do not know anything" started talking about it.³⁶ As an instance, Şabrî mentions a certain gentleman who in his work *Ilm al-Qaḍā' wa 'l-Qadar* openly suggests those countries which do not believe in predestination are progressive while the Muslim countries believe in predestination and they are backward.³⁷ The cause that is to be blamed is certainly the belief in predestination. Şabrî emphasizes that the author quotes a French thinker which proves Şabrî's conclusion that the accusation against the belief in predestination comes from the West. The Muslim author does not only ridicule *Mutakallimūn* but also declares them ignorant. He suggests that there are two types of divine knowledge regarding each individual; one in case that individual does something and the other in case he does not do it. Moreover, divine knowledge is the result of human action and it never precedes it. Şabrî finds these solutions as contradictory, confusing and ignorant. The author is not only ignorant of *Kalām* but is also ignorant of basic principles of Islam.³⁸

On the other hand, Şabrî is generally satisfied with the response of Al-Afghānī. The cause of Şabrî's satisfaction is twofold; (a) Al-Afghānī rejects the accusation that the belief in predestination is a cause of Muslim decadence and (b) affirms the traditional position of *Al-Ashā'irah* without attempting to redefine their position or change some of the accepted Islamic principles.³⁹ But when it comes to Muḥammad 'Abduh, Şabrî notices a change in the course. He expects from 'Abduh not only to follow his teacher Al-Afghānī in this issue but also to uphold his high reputation of a Muslim scholar. Bringing long quotations from *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*,⁴⁰ 'Abduh's major theological work, Şabrî successfully shows that 'Abduh's claim to follow the *Ash'arite* school of thought is false. On closer analysis, it appears that he

³⁶ *Mawqif al-Bashar*, p. 13.

³⁷ See: *Ibid.*, p. 218.

³⁸ See: *Mawqif al-Bashar*, p. 13ff.

³⁹ See: *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁰ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 32-44. See: *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1986), pp. 31ff.

merely uses the *Ash'arite* terminology while its contents do not differ from *Mu'tazilah* conceptions and solutions.

Ṣabrī questions 'Abduh's understanding of the relation between human actions and predestination. It appears that 'Abduh sees predestination only in those actions that human intended to do but which was not able to accomplish due to one or the other reason. Ṣabrī criticizes this view suggesting that the whole universe including all human action fall under the jurisdiction of predestination. Furthermore, Ṣabrī specifies that actions that were accomplished were willed and created by God in the first place but that the individuals also will them without having the power to create them as is assumed by the *Mu'tazilah* in general and 'Abduh in particular. What further strengthens Ṣabrī's view is that 'Abduh does not explicitly state that the accomplished actions were of God's creation. Ṣabrī then applies on 'Abduh what he applied on the *Ash'arites*; that they affirmed fatalism in their arguments even though they declaratively rejected it. Ṣabrī says that 'Abduh affirmed the view of *Mu'tazilah* even though he declaratively rejected it.⁴¹ Ṣabrī obviously wants to affirm God's all inclusive attribute of creation like the *Ash'arites* but at the same time he does not want to exclude the individual will and responsibility. For him, both the ideas are established; the former in the scripture and the latter is self-evident. Neither of them should be denied just because they cannot be reconciled. He holds that the secret and the mystery of predestination lie exactly here in our inability to reconcile between the two ideas which are obviously correct in their own ways.

Unlike 'Abduh, Al-Shaykh Muḥammad Bakhīt al-Muṭī'ī (1856-1935), the grand Mufti of Egypt, does not seem to adjust his position to fit "the modern demands". He tried to resolve the blame against the belief in predestination from within his own school of thought, which is *Al-Māturīdiyyah*, without introducing any adaptations to it. It was a simple restatement of their views. Ṣabrī would have appreciated him for not adjusting his position to accommodate the modern

⁴¹ See: *Mawqif al-Bashar*, p. 35.

tendencies had he not differed with the *Māturīdī* solution for the problem of predestination. So the discussion takes another turn. It is a discussion between two authentic schools of thought within the Islamic paradigm. Ṣabrī, although a *Māturīdī* except on the position of predestination, argues that the *Ash'arites'* formulation is more correct than the *Māturīdī*; the reason being that the *Ash'arites* affirm God's will and creation in all instances while the *Māturīdiyyah* approve individual will of a person as created by himself. In Ṣabrī's view, this clearly contradicts scriptural evidence.⁴² This debate continued when Ṣabrī's long time friend Zāhid al-Kawtharī defended the position of the *Māturīdiyyah* on this issue.⁴³ However, this debate tends to go into deep theological discussions and defense of a particular school of thought while the accusation that the belief in predestination causes the stagnation of the Muslims is not directly attended to.

So, Ṣabrī examines a plethora of responses and from his exposition he seems to take a representative example from each group. Accordingly, these responses may be put in the following categories:

- (a) There is a group that accepts the Western accusation that predetermination is the cause of Muslim decadence. They hold the *Kalāmī* tradition in disrespect. They formulate a new solution and try to reform Islamic belief but the way they do it does not qualify the standards of *Kalām*. The representative of this approach in Ṣabrī's view is the author of *Ilm al-Qadā' wa 'l-Qadar*.
- (b) At the extreme opposite is a group that totally rejects the accusation and sticks to traditional affirmation especially the *Ash'arī* school of thought and holds the contribution of *Kalām* in high esteem like Al-Afghānī.
- (c) Another group is that which recognizes the Western accusation, looks into the *Kalāmī* tradition and revives a particular view that was neglected for so many centuries but that somehow suits the modern mentality. The best example is 'Abduh's claim of *Asha'rism* while in fact entertaining the views of *Mu'tazilism* due to the pressure from modern rationalism.

⁴² "But ye shall not will except as Allah wills." See: The Qur'ān: *Al-Takwīr*, 29.

⁴³ See: *Al-Istibṣār fī 'l-Taḥadduth 'an al-Jabr wa 'l-Ikhtiyār* (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Azhariyyah, 2000).

(d) And yet another group represented by Al-Shaykh Bakhīt who responds from within the *Māturīdī* school of thought, a recognized branch of *Sunnī Kalām* which Ṣabrī respects but with which he engages from within the Islamic paradigm.

On the other hand, Ṣabrī maintains that the modern Muslim response has three features:

- (a) There is a trend of denying the Islamic belief of predestination itself
- (b) There is a trend that tries to correct the Muslim understanding of otherwise correct belief in predestination.
- (c) And there is a general trend of reformation, accommodation and adjustment.

Ṣabrī does not endorse any of these trends. He believes that modern Muslim thinkers are on a wrong track. As an alternative he advocates the affirmation of Islamic beliefs and revitalization and revival of Muslim faith and heart.⁴⁴ Although he supports the predominant *Ash'arite* school of thought which shares the influence with the *Māturīdī* thought in the Sunni world, yet he seems to suggest that the common people have a correct belief in predestination once they believe in it. He does not look like an extremist to impose his favourite school of thought on the general public, but he naturally advocates for it in scholarly discussions. In addition to this, his general contention is that modern Muslim thinkers have no trust in predestination.⁴⁵ They seem to have assumed that God, who is the maker of human destiny, is cruel and uncaring. For them predetermination is always evil; never good. Moreover, Ṣabrī emphasizes that submission to God's will does not imply idleness and inaction.⁴⁶

Ṣabrī summarizes his views about the modern Muslim response in two points; belief in predestination does not abrogate individual responsibility and does not devalue human efforts.⁴⁷

Ṣabrī openly expresses his reservations about the whole Muslim and Western diagnoses regarding the relation between belief in predestination and

⁴⁴ *Mawqif al-Bashar*, p. 220.

⁴⁵ See: *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁶ See: *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

Muslim decadence.⁴⁸ In his view, common Muslims lack strong faith in their religion generally and in the belief of predetermination particularly.⁴⁹ That is why he emphasizes revival of human hearts rather than reinterpretation and reformation of Islamic beliefs and their understanding. He questions the whole dialecticism of the regressive East and progressive West. To him, the Western advance is in "material sciences" and "industry" only; not in everything else as it might be assumed.⁵⁰ Muslims are backward but not because they are lacking behind the West; they are backward because they are morally corrupt, because their conviction in predetermination is weak, because of widespread ignorance, and because of disrespect for religious disciplines and people who are competent in them with the result that all the incompetent people interpret religion.⁵¹

Apart from discussing the views of the modern Muslim scholars and examining their responses, Şabrî also looks at the problem from other perspectives. He intelligently argues, in agreement with Shakîb Arsalân, whose book he translated into Turkish, that we have to look into what Muslims believed during the time of their glory. Of course, they strongly believed in predestination. More particularly, and perhaps as a response to 'Abduh, the *Asha'rite* formulation was dominating all other formulations, including *Mu'tazilites*.⁵² He concludes therefore that Muslims' strong conviction in predestination led them to success in previous centuries.

From another angle, Şabrî suggests that we should look into the present success of the West. He brings a long list of Western thinkers and scientists who through various disciplines propagate deterministic and fatalistic views.⁵³

⁴⁸ See: Ibid., p. 219.

⁴⁹ See: Ibid., p. 220.

⁵⁰ See: Ibid., p. 6.

⁵¹ See: Ibid., p. 17.

⁵² See: Ibid., p. 219.

⁵³ See: Ibid., pp. 30-31. He gets these names from a French text book *Eléments de philosophie* by Georges Lespinnasse Fonsegrive which his colleague Babanzâde Ahmed Naim rendered into Turkish under the title of *Mebâdî-i Felsefeden İlmü'n-Nefs* (İstanbul: Âmire Matbaası, 1915), p. 238-239. Ralph M. Eaton has beautifully put it in the twenties of the last century when this controversy was raging: "Each period of thought has its paramount science; in the Middle Ages, theology; from the Renaissance through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mechanics and physics; in the

According to the view that belief in predestination makes people backward, the West should also be backward, but, alas, it is not.⁵⁴ As for the difference between religious and philosophico-scientific determinism, he argues that there is no difference between them except in *al-mujbir* or the determinator. In Islam it is God, in philosophy and science it is matter and unchangeable scientific laws of nature. The universe is governed by physical and mechanical laws that determine the human position which is part and parcel of cosmic system. At other times, it is the modern psychology that argues that all human actions are predetermined and that man does not actually have a choice.⁵⁵

Şabrî concludes from these two perspectives, that if the belief in predetermination is the cause of laziness and inaction, Muslims would have never stood up and achieved such a success and glory in the first place and the present West would have never achieved the dominance that it enjoys. Both the great civilizations, the Muslim in the past and the Western in the present, believe in some kind of *al-jabr*.

In addition, the term that has been used in the *Kalām* i.e. *Afāl al-'Ibād* or human actions is extremely significant for Şabrî. It negates the accusation that predestination encourages laziness. Quite the contrary; it advocates action. It would be impossible to talk about predestination if there would be no human actions. Human actions point to predetermination.⁵⁶

For Şabrî, the belief in predestination cannot be a weakness or a cause for Muslim stagnation. He sees it chiefly as "a treasure of emotional power".⁵⁷ Furthermore, he argues that the belief in predetermination encourages actions in general and good deeds in particular. Belief in predetermination makes the believer aware of what he is doing. In his psychological analysis Şabrî elaborates that if a

nineteenth century, biology." "Social Fatalism," in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Jul., 1921), p. 380.

⁵⁴ See: *Mawqif al-Bashar*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ He relies on a lecture by Ḥusayn Ramzî in psychology which was published in *Majallat al-Qadā' al-Shar'î*. See: *Mawqif al-Bashar*, pp. 238, 240.

⁵⁶ See: *Mawqif al-Bashar*, pp. 22, 224.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

believer performs a good action that shows him that God is satisfied with him. This idea will encourage a believer to hold on to that path and make efforts for even better deeds in quality and quantity. Moreover, when a believer fails to accomplish a good deed, belief in predetermination helps him to try again. On the other hand, the evil action will make the believer think about himself and his destiny. That will encourage him to abandon evil deeds and replace them by good ones. Belief in predetermination never makes a believer feel alone. He always feels God's presence at his side. Anyone who does not attest to this belief will certainly not have this attitude and his position will be inferior. Lastly, he says that belief in predestination encourages humbleness because what ever a person achieves he knows that he did not achieve it on his own. A believer "decorates his success with humility".⁵⁸ Therefore, Şabrî does not only think that belief in predestination is not the cause of Muslim decadence and that Islam is not an obstacle for progress,⁵⁹ rather, he believes that if Muslims embrace it wholeheartedly and correctly that would tremendously improve their present situation.

⁵⁸ *Ma'wqif al-Bashar*, p. 225.

⁵⁹ See: *Ibid.*, p. 222.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Shaykh al-Islām Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī lived at a crucial juncture of modern Muslim history. He witnessed the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of Western powers that created a hitherto unfamiliar ambience in which Muslim mind engaged with extraordinary dilemmas. Ṣabrī's penetrating observation lead him to realize that socio-political, military and economic circumstances played a decisive role in shaking Muslims' confidence in their intellectual, scientific and theological heritage, and that it created entirely new context which required a creative and authentic response. The success, strength and might of the Western example was overwhelming, attracting many of Ṣabrī's Muslim contemporaries to adopt modern European systems as a way out of an appalling crisis. Muslims' encounter with modernity thus became inevitable.

Ṣabrī's era was marked with the most pretentious calls for reformation that Muslim world had ever seen before. But unlike many modern reformers who boasted of inventing entirely new ways and suggesting previously unknown and — sometimes— unacceptable policies to respond to the challenge of modernity, Ṣabrī believed that a radical departure from Islamic religious, cultural and civilisational values and traditions was not the wisest choice to make. Quite the opposite, he argued that the inherited methods of thinking, which *Mutakallimūn* developed in the glorious periods of Muslim scholarship, were still capable of delivering adequate solution for the problems that intrigued Muslim societies and intellectuals in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, he was not only convinced that these methods satisfied the requirements of the religion of Islam on one hand, and a sound rationality on the other, but also that they were universally suitable as a common mode of thinking for the whole human race even in the period in which scientific methods sidelined rational thinking and became so rampantly dominant.

Şabrî's in-diligent endeavour to develop an appropriate answer to the onslaught of modern Western modules was chiefly inspired by the early "medieval" critical response of *Mutakallimûn* to the ancient heritage of the West, i.e. Greece. Their response postulated recognition of a foreign source, its translation, analysis, summary, criticism, rejection or acceptance and —most importantly— a systematic and comprehensive integration into an Islamic paradigm; and not the opposite i.e. borrowing of a Hellenistic paradigm and recasting the elements of Islamic thought into it. Şabrî also attempted to carry out this kind of task while dealing with the challenges of modernity. Hence, many parallels between classical *Mutakallimûn*'s and modern Şabrî's responses can be drawn.

Except for some partial translation of modern works from Arabic into Turkish and vice versa, Şabrî did not translate anything from the Western sources because he did not speak any European language. What is noteworthy, however, is that he did not approve of a translation without a befitting critical appraisal. He felt that such translations served as means of propagation or text books—that some of them really were— of modernity. Therefore, Şabrî appreciated Elmalalîlî's rendering of the part on metaphysics of *Histoire de la Philosophie* with comments and criticism, while —on the other hand— strongly disagreed with translations which presented modern ideas without any comments and criticism, such as *Qışşat al-Falsafah al-Hadîthah* of Aḥmad Amîn and Zakî Najîb Maḥmûd. In a sense, therefore, Şabrî argues for a Ghazālîan approach of *Maqāsid al-Falāsifah* necessarily followed and complemented by *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*.

Furthermore, there are many similarities between classical and modern *Kalāmî* encounters with Western ideas. For instance, if Al-Ghazālî had representatives of Greek intellectual heritage in Muslim societies, such as Al-Farābî and Ibn Sînā, and in order to respond to them in a satisfactory manner, Al-Ghazālî had to learn a great deal about Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; so did Şabrî have Farah Anṭûn, Muḥammad Farîd Wajdî and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal as representatives of modernity in the East, and had to learn a great deal about Descartes, Hume, Hegel, Kant and Büchner from the West in order to engage with

those who were influenced by them in the Muslim countries. Nevertheless, if Al-Ghazālī had to face the *Mu'tazilah* to reaffirm the position of *Ahl al-Sunnah*, so Ṣabrī faced the *Neo-Mu'tazilah* —chiefly represented in Muḥammad 'Abduh and his followers according to Ṣabrī— to reaffirm the position of *Al-Ashā'irah*.

Hence, Ṣabrī relied on past Muslim experience of another culture, an experience that was engraved in Islamic scholarship and mind and transmitted from generation to generation, believing that it could help him evolve an adequate response to the new challenge of modernity. The old and new contexts were not the same —of course— but Ṣabrī thought that the past Muslim intellectual experience offered a good point to start with and a good model to work on. He perhaps wanted to prove to the modern Eastern thinkers that they did not have to disregard their own intellectual heritage and look into the historical treasure of Western knowledge in order to develop a sensible and intellectually relevant response which could successfully address the problems of modernity.

By invoking this example at the time of great crisis of Islamic scholarly identity, Ṣabrī did not only build on the living tradition of *Kalām*, emphasized its importance and practically showed the efficiency of its method, but he also acquired the much needed Islamic authentication and legalization of his efforts to explore areas that did not strictly belong to the map of inherited Islamic knowledge. Adoption of this deeply rooted model safeguarded him from running into the risk of alienation from Islamic scholarship and society; from which many Eastern modernists suffered, and protected him from compromising Islamic intellectual and religious integrity which —he believed— was not only the matter of affiliation but also the foundation for modern Muslim political identity. In that sense, Ṣabrī's contribution stands head and shoulders above many typical Muslims responses to modernity.

Ṣabrī held modern intellectual élites responsible for dissemination of Western ideas in the East. His initial engagement with modernity was through them only, but as the debate between Islam and the West raged, he was gradually driven into a deeper examination of their views. This eventually led him to a critical

assessment of the Western intellectual heritage from its beginning to his times. Şabrî conducted this assessment by rigorously applying the *Kalāmî* standards and whatever available in the form of Islamic scholarship on all periods of Western history, especially focusing the most, however, on the modern period.

During the course of this process, Şabrî learned a lot about the West. This new acquaintance of non-Islamic heritage enabled him to look into the Easterners' understanding of Western ideas and scrutinize their perspectives more critically and relevantly. He was not content with their simplistic explanations and un-mindful propagations that projected modernity as a monolithic phenomenon which only emphasized materialistic, positivistic and atheistic tendencies. The exaggeration of these tendencies formed a negative picture of modern Western intellectual contribution to which Muslim thinkers could not easily relate. Therefore, as much as Şabrî struggled to show that the Muslim intellect was capable of dealing with modern ideas, he struggled also to show that there were voices in the West that greatly resembled *Mutakallimūn*'s views, and that Eastern modernists did not give those voices their due importance and attention as expected, perhaps. Although Şabrî claimed that *Mutakallimūn*'s views did not need verification from modern Western thinkers, and that even his own deliberations were independent from Western influences, one cannot but feel that in numerous instances he revitalized and strengthened neglected positions of Islamic scholarship by quoting modern intellectual and scientific authorities, which appealed to modern Muslim mind more than their own tradition did. In this way, Şabrî also strived to expose the Easterner's brand of modernity, which—in his view—was nothing more than a caricature of intellectual processes that were going on in the West. All of this, of course, with a sole aim of suggesting a critical approach for the evaluation of Western acclaimed intellectual achievements in the light of rational reasoning and principles of established Islamic scholarship.

The project of Şabrî was growing so much that debates which he had with Eastern modernists soon shifted to debates with leading Western thinkers. He was in no way content with modernity that he thought was flourishing in the West

either. Şabrî became increasingly aware that the real encounter was not in the East, at home, with the Eastern modernists but in the West, with its intellectuals and their ideas. In this, he recognized at few important ground realities: (a) that Eastern modernists were not capable of producing any original ideas although they vigorously claimed to do so, (b) that their entire clamour about a new *al-ijtihād* meant nothing more than a blind *al-taqlīd* of selected Western ideas. And (c) that it was no longer possible to understand modern Muslim thought in isolation from modern Western thought.

In his intellectual endeavour, Şabrî followed modern ideas, back and forth, through distant geographical regions, looked into their historical evolution and evaluated their implications on two great civilizations and religions; Eastern and Western, Islamic and Christian, religious and non-religious. He devoted his life to bridge that widening gap between the past and present, old and new, East and West, traditional and modern, religious and secular, and Islamic and Christian. Şabrî's efforts quite strongly signify the fact that the implementation of a cross cultural, inter-religious and comparative approach in the study of Islamic and Western ways of thinking became unavoidable. The modern, industrially and technologically advanced world with tremendous improvements in the means of communication made sure that, like never before, it was unlikely that the two different intellectual traditions could flourish in complete isolation from one another. Recognizing the need of his time, Şabrî attempted to actualize the latent potentials of Islamic philosophical tradition and made use of them in a creative manner to offer solutions for intellectual problems and contribute to methodological issues regarding understanding religion in modern age.

In his analysis, Şabrî portrayed modernity as resting on five key elements, namely: materialism, positivism, science, scepticism and Darwinism. Except for Darwinism, these elements had existed in the Western history in one shape or the other. But combined together, in a novel fashion and under unprecedented circumstances, they formed a platform from which modern Western thinking surfaced. Although a normal degree of materialism could not be denied, Şabrî

showed that modern materialism was a threat to the modern intellect in so far as it reduced the concept of existence to matter alone, and in so far as it held everything existing to have somehow originated in matter. Positivism, in his view, further stressed the significance of matter, but it also emphasized the modern idea of progress and promoted strict application of scientific method even in areas that had nothing to do with matter and nature. Science thus dominated as an exclusive tool for understanding and was taken as a prerequisite for philosophising and a necessary precondition of religious validity. In connection with this, Şabrî regarded scepticism a double-edged sword; it served simultaneously to both constructively question and destructively deny whatever was not in conformity with materialism and positivism. As such, it assumed an unsympathetic stance against metaphysics and —subsequently— played a detrimental role in the formation of modern understanding of religion. Furthermore, Darwinism offered an alternative solution to the enigma of human existence by providing the theory of evolution as a reductionist scientific explanation of great philosophical questions such as the origin of man, life and their purpose.

Such was the dominant intellectual climate as seen through the eyes of Muşţafâ Şabrî. By identifying these key components, Şabrî struggled to unravel *al-jawhar* or the essence of modernity; not its *al-a'râḍ* or accidents, which were innumerable indeed. This analytical quest enabled him to grasp the core nature, the heart and the spirit of modernity in the West and —given his knowledge of Islamic history, religion, philosophy, politics and society— to fully recognize its far-reaching repercussions in the East. To him, such modernity represented a move against human reason and common sense. It revolted against logic, abstract rationality and all hitherto established norms of thinking. Consequently, religion, which was based —in his view— on intellect, was left without support. If logic did not matter, if reasoning was negatively affected and if common sense rejected — Şabrî thought— no correct attitude could have been developed towards the study of religion and understanding of life.

Ṣabrī held that modernity's materialistic and positivistic emphasis on science disrupted the equilibrium between reason, senses and matter in Islamic paradigm. Thus, the inferiors to reason i.e. senses and matter became its superiors setting off a process of reductionism which reinterpreted human thought in solely materialistic and positivistic terms. Situation deteriorated to such an extent that if something could not fit in this kind of explanation, it was simply denied. This state of affairs created enormous crisis in modern thinking that Ṣabrī tirelessly grappled with. He felt that sound reasoning and correct thinking were seriously endangered, and in this situation, he designated to himself a role of a protector and saviour of logic, correct thinking and reasoning rather than that of a narrow-minded theologian who could not see the greater picture because of his involvement in petty peripheral issues.

Hence, Ṣabrī struggled to set reason free from materialism, positivism and scientism and to reinstate it to a proper place that it really deserved. It is indeed very significant fact that a Muslim thinker, a *Mutakallim* by training and vocation, felt that reason was endangered and struggled to rescue it in the so called age of reason. Furthermore, Ṣabrī acknowledged the contribution of modern science and its efficiency but persuasively argued that science should not be above reason but under its dominion and control. Consequently, he sought to widen the concept of existence in order to include matter and what is beyond it securing a room for thinking about metaphysics in general and God in particular. Ṣabrī argued that believing in God was not a mere myth, which was a popular notion in modernity, but a necessary rational principle which was the basis of all knowledge, as argued by *Mutakallimūn* and fathers of modern Western philosophy. Therefore, he tirelessly participated in the ongoing debate surrounding rational and scientific proofs for the existence of God. Based on thorough analysis and revision, he discredited arguments which used to be regarded as final judgement against the existence of God. By freeing science from the chains of materialism, positivism and scientism, he destroyed the modern myth that science opposed religion and demonstrated that modern science —with its present methodology— could not

oppose the existence of God, and that, by placing it in traditional paradigm of knowledge, it could even reaffirm the rational arguments. Furthermore, by emphasizing partiality and temporality of scientific knowledge, Şabrî questioned scientific description of natural world and laws which governed it. Subsequently, he reopened the door for accepting the veracity of miracles and their actual reality. Having proved the existence of God and rational possibility of miracles, he established the principle of prophethood as a channel of communication of divine message. He, thus, strengthened the position of reason by the veracity of scripture, which embodied divine instructions, and guided reason in matters in which it could not delve confidently. It was then easy for Şabrî to demonstrate the possibility of resurrection by combining rational and scriptural evidence. Identifying these three principles, i.e. the existence of God, veracity of prophethood and miracles and rational possibility and scriptural inimitability of resurrection, Şabrî established what he thought to be an essential base for religion from which all other minor and major religious concepts could branch out. Thus, by clearing modern objections, Şabrî attempted to establish foundational principles of religion on both rational and scientific footing.

In the process of his critical discussions, Şabrî re-assessed modern conceptions of religion which tried to root religion in primitive, pre-scientific, mythological, emotional and unconscious human realm denying it any rational grounding and credibility. Şabrî argued that religion was not a non-comprehensive ill phenomenon which was a product of man's immature imagination, or a result of human evolution and social relations. For him, that was not only a misrepresentation of religion but also the gravest degradation of human being. Moreover, religion could not be blamed for stagnation and decadence in Muslim societies. Consequently, on the human plane, Şabrî's response was to bring religion in the sphere of rational, not denying its emotional, un-understandable and material aspects, but subduing them to the supremacy of reason.

Şabrî believed that metaphysical reasoning, which he tried to free from modern menaces of materialism, positivism, scientism and scepticism, had the

potential of penetrating the borders which science prescribed for the natural world. Metaphysical reasoning had the potential of placing religion —outside the human place— in the sphere of the highest place of divine. This divine is understood to be the source of all perfection and a source which is more rational than human reason. Consequently, it is there to be explored and recognized as such. Matter, senses and science are there to assist in this process.

Thus, Şabrî's project of integrating philosophy, theology and science shows that he worked on assimilation of different aspects of knowledge attempting to secure their unity. He solved the biggest problem of modernity —that of the clash between science and religion— by not confronting science and religion directly but by juxtaposing them and proving the strength of the former at the expense of the latter. The outcome of this comparison was that science could not oppose religion because science did not oppose reason. And reason —in turn— did not oppose religion, but supported it.

Şabrî clearly aimed at a creation of an intellectually conducive environment in which a better understanding of religion might be sought. Hence, he prepared the ground for an approach to the study of religion which would simultaneously appreciate philosophy and science, and seriously consider the existence of God which he considered as the primary article of religion. Significantly, the establishment of comparative study of religions as a discipline commenced in this modern antireligious context, and that the ideas of the nineteenth century, with which Şabrî engaged from a peculiar point of view, formed the backbone of modern study of religion in the West. By employing classical methods of *Kalām* in criticizing prevailing intellectual trends, Şabrî deconstructed the underlying structure of modern approaches to the study of religion and offered an alternative direction that stemmed from a particular religious and scholarly tradition. The fact that the old method of *Mutakallimūn* gave birth to classical Muslim intellectuality and identity, and that modern Western researchers appreciated it, and that modern Muslim scholars proudly celebrated it, cannot be over-emphasized due to its importance. Both, Western and Muslim scholars agree that *Mutakallimūn* of the

past contributed immensely to what came to be known as comparative study of religion. Paradoxically, however, if such a method was implemented in the modern times, it was termed as backward and unscientific. But, this did not stop Şabrî from applying this traditional approach in discussing modern concepts and ideas, and addressing new issues and problems.

Şabrî struggled to engage with modernity with a mind of a classical *Mutakallim* who worked within an established frame of philosophical principles. Unlike the majority of modernists, he thought within his own philosophical tradition, understood in its conventional terms and communicated in its recognisable language.

However, just as the discipline of *Kalām* considers religion from a specific perspective, so Şabrî's intellectual endeavour, by its very nature, offers a particular treatment of religion as well. Understandably so, because the antireligious predicament of modernity directed Şabrî's concern towards a defence of rational foundations of religion on a top priority basis and built upon his own scholarly orientation. Furthermore, just as *Kalām* provided a rational justification of religion in the past so that other Islamic disciplines such as *Fiqh*, *Uşûl al-Fiqh*, *al-Taşawwuf*, *al-Tafsîr* and *Hadîth* could originate, develop and evolve, so did Şabrî struggle to prepare for a future multidimensional, comprehensive and holistic approach to the understanding of the phenomenon of religion in the modern world, an approach which could not have been imagined without neutralizing theoretical obstacles in the spirit of *Kalāmî's* principle of *Radd al-Shubuhât*. Thus, his in-depth analysis of state and religion, perhaps the most controversial theme in modern political philosophy, and burning social issues such as the place of women, are indicative of formation of a kernel of such a holistic approach even in his own writings.

Şabrî's contribution hence represents a unique response to modernity that stems from classical *Kalām*: the cradle of Muslim study of religion and a predecessor for modern study of religion in the West, and an insightful look into the relation between religion and modernity. His response contains elements of both Islamic traditional and modern Western disciplines, and most distinctively a

sense of authenticity, creativity and independence of mind. As such, it is not only significant as a modern Islamic approach to the study of religion but also as a representative of non-Western study in the field that has been for so long dominated by Western approaches.

It is hoped that Şabrî's contribution will play a greater role in the project of world-wide study of religion. How much sense will Muslim, Western and other scholars make of it, and what comprehensive ways to the study of religion will they work out, remains to be seen. *Wa Allāhu A'lam.*

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