Concerns on Philosophy in the Arab World: State of the Art*

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T IS MOST unfortunate that the place of philosophy in our educational curricula is so humbled, made incapable of forming the minds and personalities of our students; and this is due to the foul treatment directed at philosophy conceptually, as a subject, and with respect to methodology, such that a certain minister of education in a particular Arab country recently assassinated its own national intellect by removing philosophy from its high school curriculum under the pretext that philosophy is a subject of mere dictation, with no positive impact on a student's ability to think. Furthermore, philosophy itself has disappeared, or more specifically, "awareness" has disappeared in the educational programs in other Arab countries too on account of flimsy excuses similar to the one above. Policymakers in education appear to have forgotten the historical truism, established undeniably through the observation of the rise and fall of civilizations, of the relationship between philosophical activity and civilizational blossoming, because simply put, thought is the essence of civilization. The history of Islamic civilization bears witness to this as well. The famous edict of Ibn al-Salah prohibiting philosophy and the proliferation of the saying "whoever learns logic becomes a heretic", were the harbingers of the decline of a civilization built by our forefathers, departing from the idea that philosophy is a crucial element in the traning and education of the religous mind.

I had almost come to believe some form of organized, planned sabotage had taken hold of the Arab world as a result of the violent separation between education and thinking, such that in our educational curricula, the policy is thus: teaching comes first, and thinking comes second. This rather dangerous, intended separation between thought and education-in spite of the inextricable connection between the two according to the most important theories in teaching, such as those explicated by Jean Piaget—generations of capable students have been at the mercy of the standing educational regimes; just as this barrier, on the other hand, has been constructed without any consideration of forming critical minds capable of understanding the most basic human values and concepts such as justice, freedom, and dignity. The effects of this separation on the level of public discourse and practice, and in the spread of ignorant religious leaders and preachers occupying the pulpits and television stations, in addition to the spread of consumerism, and in the helplessness of our societies in the face of vicious globalization, and in cultural and epistemological defeat, are indication enough

^{*} I apologize to the reader for the rushed nature of this study. The brief pages that follow cannot account for all the developments in Arabic philosophy, and thus gaps will appear here and there. I also apologize to many of the great academics in the field whose names are not mentioned. This is not due to their inadequacy but because I meant only to present enough examples to make my point, rather than attempt to exhaust all works and writers. To do otherwise is not possible given the limitations of this paper. Lastly, any critical remarks that may be found in this paper are not accidental, but based on a large web of evidence and experience in the field

that real philosophical thought with which one would arm oneself with an awareness, enlightenment, and independent reasoning is utterly absent. Indeed, the worst casualty endured by the Arab mind in these ideological raids is the loss of a sense of critical, independent reflection, or *philosophizing* in the Kantian sense of the term.

To evaluate the current state of philosophy in the Arab world this study will investigate the following areas of inquiry in order to work towards an approach to philosophy that will situate the subject within its proper place in education, and thus not allow for future marginalization: (1) the importance of philosophical thought by stressing its relationship between civilizational and human development; (2) the field of philosophy as development of the mind; (3) teaching philosophy in the Arab world: the teacher, the student, the curriculum designer, the teaching environment; (4) teaching philosophy prior to the university level; (5) teaching philosophy in university at the magisterial and doctoral levels, and post-secondary research; (6) public outreach in philosophy: universities, courses, and conferences; (7) cultural and philosophical initiatives and their inability to move beyond themselves; (8) philosophy in Western academia: is it possible to adopt methods and techniques used in Western academia critically and beneficially?; (9) Islamic philosophy: is it possible to blow off the dust from this tradition, learn to properly read and understand it, and grant it its appropriate place in the tapestry of human thought?; (10) harvesting philosophical output from the second half of the twentieth century: edited books, encyclopedic volumes, monographs, translated texts, dominant philosophical trends, philosophical and cultural workshops, media, and university level theses; (11) contemporary philosophical questions; (12) recommendations for schools of the future.

THE NEED FOR PHILOSOPHY IN SOCIAL, REGIONAL, AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The observer of civilizational history knows well that intellectual revival and enlightenment precede the manifestation of a civilization, which remains indebted to the philosophy that led to the creation of those efforts. The Arabs had indeed covered vast territory in this regard during the late nineteenth century, but sadly have retreated significantly since then, if not worse off than they were prior to that period. It is not even necessary to exert any effort into presenting the evidence for this; a quick glance at the current state of affairs is enough to know that the Arab is at an all-time low: he has lost his identity, he is alienated from his reality, limited in thought, deprived of basic rights, lacking a forum for free thought and discussion under some of the worst educational regimes, in addition to suffering crushing economic pressure; above all, he is afflicted with a deep suspicion of the future.

The cause of the aforementioned ailments is attributable to the loss of philosophical thought among both the laity and the elites. By philosophy here, we are referring to a wider sense of the term to mean the art of discovering the reality of things and the removal of impediments from the mind, such that the mind is critical, analytical, and reflective. The disappearance of philosophy from educational curricula in secondary education and the utter neglect of philosophy in post-secondary education has led us to a point where there now exists an profound sense of our philosophical thought. Any attempt at creating a society of critical thinkers with the current educational curricula as a basis is

akin to trying to build a city on a foundation of sand, for they lack any real philosophical basis.

The golden age of Islamic civilization that dominated the nineteenth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, and the European Renaissance beginning in the fifteenth century, used as their point of departure the value of the mind, in addition to inventing methods and tools of thought. Both movements—without prior agreement, as if it were a universal rule to reach an enlightened state, and to extinguish ignorance and backward thought—took to putting themselves and their inherited traditions to deep, reflective criticism, without attempting to protect themselves and without sanctifying their traditions beyond critical analysis.

Such phase was about to commence throughout the Islamic societies but the more promising schools of thought and intellectual and philosophical trends that developed in the past century had begun dying as a result of the inability of the following generations to continue the project of their predecessors in developing their work, and instead fell to the claws of a consumerist culture that now dominates the Arab East and West.

THE TEACHING OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE ARAB WORLD

Part of this study is an attempt to critically observe the teaching of philosophy in the Arab world. In doing so, however, we will only sample conditions in a number of different Arab countries since the essential issues are shared by the states of the Arab world with respect to the treatment of philosophy. We will use data from Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

Philosophy is taught in secondary schools across the Arab world, with the exception of a number of Arab Gulf states, in varying degrees according to: teaching hours, its coverage early or late in secondary education, whether it is compulsory on all students or only some, such as students of arts curricula, and whether it is possible for non-arts students to also participate in these classes. Lastly, they differ in whether or not philosophy is taught alongside logic.

More importantly of course is the material that is actually taught and how effective it is in developing the mind in an ordered manner, and that it is founded on the principles of correct thinking and critical inquiry; for these two elements are the most important in developing students intellectually and spiritually during this critical period of their lives.

After perusing a selection of the teaching material currently in use, I have been able to identify the causes that lead students at the secondary level to avoid philosophy on the one hand, along with the main problems with philosophical instruction on the other. Firstly, some of the curricula were merely French material translated directly into Arabic. Others take a historical approach to philosophy, and yet others take philosophical terminology as an entry point, which is both tedious and difficult for students, especially since many of these terms are best understood in their original sense, not through translation into the Arabic language. The remainder of these curricula are simply outdated, and do not reflect any understand whatsoever of the contemporary student body and the conditions in which they live and study.

I also perused a number of textbooks from the not-so-distant past, and for example, came across one text written for students in Grade 12, assigned for the 1955–6 school year in Egypt. The title of this text was

Philosophical Questions, and on the cover were the names of the great thinkers and educators: Tawfiq al-Tawil, Zaki Najib Mahmud, and 'Abduh Faraj. The text is distinguished by an astute selection of philosophical topics in a manner that is clear and clarifying. It is a book with real and sincere purpose that likewise produced real results.¹

PHILOSOPHY IN ARAB UNIVERSITIES AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL B

Within Egyptian universities today, there exist some fifty departments of philosophy distributed inconsistently throughout the faculties of arts, education, theology, Arabic, and Islamic studies, with seventeen departments at al-Azhar University alone, all of which are associated with theological studies. Beginning in the 1980s, Morocco eliminated all philosophy departments and replaced them with Islamic studies, with the exception of the University of Fez, Rabat, and Marrakesh. These latter universities also offered courses in philosophy for students in preparatory programs throughout all other universities as well. In Tunisia, despite there being some nineteen universities in the country, philosophy is only offered at the universities of Tunis, Kairouan, and Susa, in addition to the faculty at Zaytuna, which mostly emphasizes Islamic philosophy.

In Jordan, with twenty universities throughout the country there exists only one department of philosophy at the University of Jordan, in which students may pursue an undergraduate studies or a master's degree. We should also note here that philosophy has not been taught at Jordanian secondary schools for three decades.

The last quarter-century had seen the universities of Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE embrace high-level philosophical studies, taking on faculty members from the pioneering generation of scholars who left a clear imprint on the younger generations of the Arab Gulf states.

It is also noteworthy that the departments of philosophy at Iraqi universities were considered to be the best in the Arab world, and if it had not been for the severe living conditions in Iraq brought on by war and sanctions over the past twenty years, these schools would have been leading the rest in terms of the production of serious philosophical studies, both traditional and modern.

The past three decades witnessed a strong interest in philosophy and sociology from students and secondary school graduates. The relationship between the two fields of philosophy and sociology in most Arab universities was noticeable, not least in the first two years of undergraduate study where courses were common to students of both disciplines before they moved on to specializing in the fields of philosophy, psychology, sociology, or anthropology. Nevertheless, as these fields began to grow, and acquire a certain independence from one another starting in the first year of undergraduate studies, new disciplines began to grow out of them: media, communications, political science, and law; the growth of these disciplines also required the division of certain subjects to meet the demands for these new specializations.

From a general perspective the central output of the education system did not reach high standards resulting in the overall level of philosophical comprehension remained rather low. What is most astonishing is that this weakness is common to all universities, without any one country being singled out. Although not exhaustive, what follows are some of the most important of these causes:

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Compare the analysis and critics of Mahmud Amin al-ʿAlim to the aforementioned book in *Philosophy in the Contemporary Arab World: Papers of the First Arabian Philosophical Conference* (Beirut: Centre for the Studies of Arab Unity, 1985), 138–45.

- (1) Most instructors on university level charged with these subjects are not specialized, which in turn forces them to teach the material in a very rudimentary way, such that the content is summarized in a mere amount of pages, which students focus only on memorizing, not understanding. The result is such that university-level education lacks any distinction from the previous levels of education.
- (2) The lack of access to sources, which in turn has caused a sharp break between the measly content a student acquires for the sake of passing, often with flying colors, and the understanding of the student and their familiarity with its sources.
- (3) Weak foundational skills among some teachers in language and expertise.
- (4) General ignorance among students and teaching committees of philosophical language, which is in turn caused by ignorance of terminological developments in other languages, and an inability to keep up with educational innovation in the developed world.
- (5) Poor communication between teacher and student, mostly due to both the increasing number of students and the failure to develop new solutions to deal with the higher volume of students.
- (6) The disconnect between the content of study and contemporary problems, and issues of importance to modern Arabs, despite the fact that philosophy is the subject naturally most with these questions.
- (7) The last and most important of these causes is the lack of proper methods and the loss of true forms of thinking, which has subsequently led to the loss of critique, which undermines the entire basis of philosophy.

In addition, most if not all departments of philosophy lack both adequate teaching curricula for the discipline and a plan for the future, which in turn has led to a type of anarchy, and a loss of milestones with which they can orient themselves.

The challenge remains then, for the school of the future, to include among its areas of research, the development of serious strategies with clear goals for the courses involving philosophy, such that they could effectively remedy the aforementioned problems. The relationship between philosophy and the job market is equally problematic, which can be remedied by directing and marketing philosophical studies to areas of greater relevance with contemporary conditions.

PHILOSOPHY AT THE GRADUATE LEVEL

Most universities in the Middle East and North Africa have magisterial and doctoral programs. They vary according to the approach they adopt, but generally, most programs grant degrees according to one of two ways. Either the student begins with a preparatory year in their master's or PhD program, wherein they engage in a set number of courses, such as research methodology, a course related to their area of specialization, in addition to one or more foreign language. After this stage the student begins working on their thesis under the tutelage of one or more supervisor. The second approach involves the student taking a set number of courses distributed across two academic years, wherein their thesis is written in one of the classes and completed within that program.

After analyzing a number of master's and PhD theses (thirty-nine PhD theses, eighty master's theses), which have been successfully defended, mostly by Egyptian universities, we note the following points:

- (1) The number of theses written on subjects relating to Islamic philosophy far exceed all other branches of philosophy combined. After some investigating, including discussions with students, researchers, assistant professors, supervisors, and the theses themselves, I realized that one of the main motives for this is the avoidance of learning the foreign languages necessary to conduct research in those areas, such as the case in modern philosophy, or even medieval or ancient philosophy. What is strange, however, is that some of the aforementioned theses have in their cited works, materials written in foreign languages, but after looking for any reference to these sources in the actual research, I found no such indication.
- (2) Some supervisors oversaw research outside their field of expertise, irrespective if the subject in question was general or specific. So for example, we have observed some professors who specialize in modern philosophy overseeing research made on Islamic philosophy, or professors of Islamic studies overseeing works conducted on Greek philosophy, or Eastern philosophy. Another example is that of supervisors who specialize in modern logic overseeing research conducted on Islamic philosophy and the history of philosophy.

There would be nothing to take issue with here if philosophy were taught differently in the Arab world. The reality is, we have only studied one branch of philosophy in the Arab world, that being the history of philosophy. Thus, we have been learning "about" philosophy, but not learning philosophy itself; the difference between the two cannot be overstated. To learn "about" philosophy only grants the student shallow knowledge of philosophy and a limited scope. To learn philosophy necessitates learning everything acquired from philosophy, in addition to the secrets of the craft, thus making it a holistic, universal approach, where a student learns both how philosophy has been used, and how the student is to execute the art itself.

From here we see why the methods used in philosophy at the graduate level have produced such limited results. The students are not trained according to a critical approach of philosophy. The approach is the discipline itself, and a researcher cannot be effective if they lack a critical method that they are skilled in; this is precisely what is lacking in Arab programs.

- (3) Experts in the fields of Greek and medieval philosophy, both Christian and Jewish, have caused these subjects to be distributed randomly among the rest of the professors, which has led to a number of repeated studies under different titles. Had there been more experts, they would have known that identical studies had long been completed in other languages.
- (4) In the samples I have studied, with the exception of partial sections in some of the theses, none of them discuss or approach any contemporary problems that affect us today, nor have they discussed any major questions that have arisen from developments in modern science. None of the works addressed any of the problems specific to the Arab world, such as the relationship between religion and philosophy. It is as if researchers in philosophy are sitting by idly while the rest are actively participating in it.

- (5) The vast majority of the students in this sample have adopted a historical survey approach to their studies, and we find few that have adopted philosophically analytical or critical approaches. The results are theses that lack seriousness and depth, or for lack of a better term, their "philosophicalness". This is caused either by an unfamiliarity with analytical approaches, or insufficient practice in applying such approaches during the earlier phases of their education, be it undergraduate or graduate-level courses.
- (6) There is also an apparent weakness in the use and understanding of philosophical terminology. This is partly due to their ignorance of how these terms change across different eras, schools, or individual philosophers. Noteworthy is the unfounded confidence among many writers as a feature of this age, especially when faced with the problem of philosophical terminology.

Despite this, I did find a handful of brilliant examples that demonstrate the aptitude of the student and the seriousness of the supervisor. This, I surmise, is due to the fact that the supervising professor was from a previous age, those driven by an individual passion for their area of expertise. These are the exception, however, not the rule.

ARABIC PHILOSOPHY BETWEEN THE PIONEERING GENERATION AND CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

Rational inquiry and the founding of philosophical schools and trends began early in the Ancient East, standing behind its massive civilizational achievements; but it was on the shores of Anatolia in the seventh century ce that the world witnessed the birth of philosophical questions around which we remain gathered to this day in commentary, analysis, contribution, discussion, and refinement. Indeed, hardly any discussion of philosophy today is free from a reference to its Greek roots, in distance or proximity, in the cosmopolitan profile of human history.

Afterwards, the Arabs and Muslims more generally, took on the banner of philosophy, bearing their burden for human civilization by preserving that ancient heritage in their own language at a time when philosophy had lost much of its strength in a slowly deteriorating Byzantine Empire. The Arabs and Muslims of this early period excelled at imbibing and understanding Greek philosophy in addition to founding new trends and schools of thought.

However, Islamic civilization faced a major setback in its development as a result of massive attacks on philosophy in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Islamic thought remained in that state until the nineteenth century, producing a major epistemological crisis in the Islamic world that divided its past from its present, and deprived it of a clear vision of the future, while philosophy outside the Arab world continued to advance; Western thought has successfully continued its experiment, connecting its yesterdays to its tomorrows.

In the early twentieth century, Arabic thought began once again to feel its way out after a long absence. A generation of intelligent, sincere lovers of philosophy appeared on the scene who had realized at the very outset, the inextricable link of proper thinking to civilizational and cultural revival; proper thinking, that is, whereby thinking is the act of the mind, and philosophy is the training of the mind. In this vein, two trends emerged: one was concerned with blowing the dust

from the heritage of our ancestors, while the other was concerned with acquainting itself with Western philosophy and the various manifestations of its ideas.

This pioneering generation boasts the names of the great thinkers of the Arab world, to whom it is indebted nearly the entirety of the cultural and philosophical climate since the 1930s to the 1990s: Sheikh Mustafa 'Abd al-Razig, the founder of the Modern Islamic Philosophy with respect to its methodology and approach in his text Tambid fi tarikh al-falsafa al-Islamiyya [Introduction to the history of Islamic philosophy], containing a series of lectures given at various Egyptian universities. Under his tutelage arose a second generation of brilliant students, among them 'Ali Sami al-Nashhar, who would later compose the excellent study Manahij al-bahth 'inda mufakkiri al-Islam [Research methods among Islamic thinkers]. Among al-Nashhar's most significant students would be Ahmad Mahmud Subhi. Another student of 'Abd al-Razig is Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi Abu Rida, the expert on al-Kindi, who would publish for the first time Rasa'il al-Kindi al-falsafiyya [Philosophical writings of al-Kindi], and which remains to this day an exemplary model for the accuracy of its content. Abu Rida would also achieve fame for his works reintroducing Islamic atomism, Ibrahim ibn Yasar al-Nazzam, and the Nazzami School. Another of 'Abd al-Razig's students Ibrahim Beyoumi Madkour would publish Fi al-falsafa al-Islamiyya: manhaj wa tatbiq [On Islamic philosophy: method and application], in which he demonstrates a mastery of the Islamic peripatetic school, challenging the idea that Islamic thought is contained exclusively in kalam and usul al-figh. Meantime, Mahmud Qasim would dive into the deep seas of Ibn Rushd in his critical edition of Manahij al-adilla fi 'aqa'id al-milla [Proof methods for the creeds of the Muslims], with a strong introduction critiquing the schools of kalam, completing with strength the project that Ibrahim Beyoumi Madkour started. It was only after these scholars did a new generation of pioneering philosophers come onto the scene.

As the foremost scholar of Arab existentialism, 'Abd al-Rahman Badawi's doctoral dissertation al-Zaman al-wujudi [Existential time] represented the birth of an Arab mind that was no less capable than its counterparts in the West. His thesis was later edited and published under the title Le Problème de la Morte dans la Philosophie Existentie (1964). He also presented to Arabic readers in general, and specialists in particular, the history of Greek philosophy and the history of Medieval philosophy of Christendom, in addition to his Dirasat wujudiyya [Studies in existentialism] along with tens of translations of Western philosophical works, demonstrating an acute grasp of both modern and ancient European languages, discernable in his independent work, the three-volume Mawsu at al-falsafa [Encyclopedia of philosophy].

There also remained the great thinker Zaki Najib Mahmud. He returned from England with a mastery of logical positivism, for which he produced a great deal of literature in the Arabic language such as his Nahwa falsafa 'ilmiyya [Towards a scientific philosophy], and Khurafat al-mitafizika [The superstition of metaphysics], only to shift his interests later to the Arabic philosophical heritage, sparking a serious attempt to absorb it, reproduce it, and refine it for future generations in a manner that still deserves serious reflection.

Completing the pioneering generation were the great minds of Abu al-Ila 'Afifi, Muhammad 'Aziz al-Habbabi, Tawfiq al-Tawil, Zakariyya

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Ibrahim, al-Tahir ibn Ashur, Husayn Marwa, Kamal Yusuf al-Haj, Yusuf Karam, Muhammad Thabit al-Fandi; the torch would pass on later to the likes of Hasan Hanafi, Fu'ad Zakariyya, Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri, Tayyib Tizini, and other luminescent names in the world of Arabic thought.

This generation is perhaps best summarized in the words of Zaki Najib Mahmud, who said that it was ultimately a movement that attempted to transplant Western philosophical thought into Eastern soil, or from the earlier generations of Islam into the culture of the twentieth century.

Briefly now, we will attempt to summarize the contemporary philosophical trends present in the Arab world today in what follows: logical positivism, analytic philosophy, and mathmetical logic (Zaki Najib Mahmud); philosophy of language (Kamal Yusuf al-Haj); existentialism (Abd al-Rahman Badawi); religious existentialism (Zakariyya Ibrahim); Thomism (Yusuf Karam); personalism (Muhammad Aziz al-Habbabi); Islamic phenomenology (Hasan Hanafi); Marxism (Husayn Marwa); structuralism (Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri); and lastly, the interpretation of ancient beliefs and ideology with modern Western forms in Muhammad Arkoun's philosophy of Islam.

Thus we note that some of the major philosophical trends in the Arab world ultimately stem from Western thought before they were developed and branched into their own schools and students. Ultimately, these turned into "Arab" programs of thought that reinterpret the Islamic tradition through the lens of these imported systems without consideration of the traditional tools of thought and interpretation which developed with them. This can be seen distinctly in Jabiri's structuralist program Nagd al-'aql al-'Arabi [Critique of Arabic reason]; Husayn Marwa, who adopted Marxism and its method in his al-Naza'at al-maddiyya [Materialist awakenings]; Sadiq Jalal al-'Azim in his Nagd al-fikr al-dini [Critique of religious thought]; Mahmud Amin al-'Alim in his Ma'rakat al-turath [The struggle of tradition]; 'Abdullah al-ʿArawi in al-Idyolojiyya al-ʿArabiyya al-muʿasira [Contemporary Arabic ideology]; and Tayyib Tizini in Sosyolojiyya al-fikr al-Islami [Sociology of Islamic thought]. Likewise, analytic philosophy in the hands of Zaki Najib Mahmud performs the same function in his Tajdid al-fikr al-'Arabi [Renewal of Arabic thought], and Hasan Hanafi, who utilizes phenomenological hermeneutics in al-Turath wa al-tajdid [Tradition and renewal], preceded with the same approach by 'Abd al-Rahman Badawi and Zakariyya Ibrahim.

PHILOSOPHICAL ACTIVITY IN THE ARAB WORLD: ASSOCIATIONS AND MEDIA

There are numerous outputs that carry the work of researchers to the general reader and to the expert: from the very narrow academic ladder that produces work for promotions at various institutes and universities, to more recent websites dedicated to distributing publications more quickly and effectively, in addition to symposiums and the publication of anthologies and journals of a general nature by universities—all place philosophical works alongside other specializations.

Most if not all arts or humanities faculties publish journals or annals that once were printed regularly, but now vary according to circumstances or the amount of works that need to be submitted in any period. On many occasions, anthologies or monologues are published for the purposes of academic promotion. It has become a far cry from when these same publications represented serious academic exercise, and which continue to provide contemporary researchers with invaluable references and research material.

Since the 1970s, the National Council of Culture in Kuwait has published a seasonal journal known as *The World of Thought* ['Alam al-fikr]. It continues to this day, publishing editions in all areas of philosophy, and editions dedicated to singular matters, in addition to the publication of strong monographs in philosophy. It is one example of a serious journal that has made a noticeable impact on Arab cultural life.

Meantime, while Egypt used to be the benchmark in the publishing of journals and annals of high quality, the last serious journal that remains is the Journal of Contemporary Thought [Majallat al-fikr al-mu'asir]. The rest of the journals that were once printed regularly have stopped: The Journal of the Philosophical Society [Majallat al-jami 'at al-falsafiyya] has gone out of print after printing only six editions; Philosophy and the Age [al-Falsafa wa al-asr], which is published by the High Council for Culture has not produced more than two publications in the past two years. It seems that the language of irregularity has become a hallmark of the age, as similar problems have afflicted publications in other Arab countries as well, such as the *Journal* of Philosophical Studies [Majallat al-dirasat al-falsafiyya] and Orbits [Madarat] along with the Periodical [Insha'], all of which are in Tunisia. Other examples include the Moroccan journals: Thought and Critique [Fikr wa naqd], Contemporary Arab Thought [al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-mua'sir], and Contemporary Writings [Kitabat Mu'asira], and lastly in Egypt, Philosophical Papers [Awraq falsafiyya].

As far as philosophical societies are concerned, the Egyptian Philosophical Society is the oldest in the Arab world, giving rise to other societies across the Arab world in its wake. Some of these include the Philosophical Society of the Maghreb [al-fam'iyya al-falsafiyya bi al-Maghrib], the Philosophical Society of Tataouine [al-fam'iyya al-falsafiyya bi al-Yaman], and the Philosophical Society in Jordan, the Philosophical Society of Syria, and the Tunisian Society of Philosophical Studies [al-fam'iyya al-Tunusiyya li dirasat al-falsafiyya]. In Tunisia also is the Orbits Society [fam'iyya al-madarat] and the Tunisian Society of Architectural Innovation and Aesthetics [al-fam'iyya al-Tunisiyya li al-inshayat wa al-jamaliyyat]. The Tunisians also established what is known as the Philosophy Lab [Mukhtabar al-falsafa] at the University of Tunisia dedicated to research in the areas of culture, technology, and various philosophical approaches.

Most of these societies, however, struggle with a lack of funding, which reflects poorly on their activities, especially when it comes to publishing materials, or running public forums and conferences. In turn, this has prompted interested private individuals with strong political and international links to capitalize on any opportunity to garner support for publications, conferences, and public forums in the Arab world at large.

Publishing houses, whose primary interests are in university textbooks, compete in the production of waves of textbooks and workbooks; whose goal is to be educational, adhering to proper method, but hardly have a sense of what methods are, let alone being able to produce them. Thus it is common to see bookstores replete with books on philosophy and philosophical questions only to realize that these books are one of two things: a master's or PhD thesis in which the

author insisted on publishing his text as a teaching text, or some summary or rearrangement of materials equivalent to that found in an earlier text produced merely for the aims of publishing sales.

Thus in the past twenty years, there has not been a single text published in philosophy that has been able to make any impact or invite serious discussion, with the exception of two: *The Philosophy of the Mirror* [Falsfat al-mir'at] by Mahmud Rajab, and The Tyrant [al-Taghiya], by Imam 'Abd al-Fattah Imam, both of whom are able professors of philosophy.

In spite of this, many of the eminent publishing houses, including the prestigious Centre for Arab Unity Studies [Markaz dirasat al-wuhda al-ʿArabiyya] and others, still present the Arab reader a wide range of excellent works of authors such as: Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri and Hasan Hanafi, ʿAbdullah al-ʿArawi, Mahmud Amin al-ʿAlim, Fu'ad Zakariyya, Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman, Imam ʿAbd al-Fattah Imam, Mahmud Rajab, Ahmad Madhi, Hasan ʿAbd al-Hamid, ʿAbd al-Salam ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAli, Salman al-Badour, Jamal al-ʿAlawi, ʿAli Umlil, Salim Yafut, Kamal ʿAbd al-Latif, Muhammad Mahran, Salah Raslan, Mahmud Sayyid Ahmad, Abu Yaʿrub al-Marzuqi, ʿAbd al-Samad al-Dayalimi, Saʿid ibn Saʿid, Muhammad Waqidi, and Murad Wahbah.

It is also noteworthy that most professors of philosophy have turned to writing on enlightenment and social change, to the point that many of them are now only interested in philosophical movements aimed at creating social and political change. Some of these books have enjoyed wide readership, while most are confined to narrow elitist circles. Nevertheless, I am confident that these works will not find much resonance in Arab society at large, for its interest in philosophy has dwindled drastically, just as its teachers have stopped producing it and discussing it with a critical eye.

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE IN THE ARAB WORLD

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

The following list of texts in the Arabic language contains invaluable sources on the history of philosophy: Yusuf Karam's Tarikh al-falsafa al-Yunaniyya [History of Greek philosophy], Tarikh al-falsafa al-Urobiyya fi al-ʿasr al-wasit [The history of European philosophy during the Middle Ages], Tarikh al-falsafa al-haditha [History of modern philosophy]; 'Abd al-Rahman Badawi's Rabic al-fikr al-Yunani [The spring of Greek thought], Kharif al-fikr al-Yunani [The fall of Greek thought], Tarikh al-falsafa al-Islamiyya [History of Islamic philosophy] (originally in French); Amira Hilmi Matar's al-Falsafa 'inda al-Yunan [Philosophy in Greece]; 'Ali Sami al-Nashhar's three-volume Nash'at al-fikr al-falsafi fi al-Islam [The beginnings of philosophical thought in Islam]; Majid Fakhri's Tarikh al-falsafa al-Islamiyya [History of Islamic philosophy]; De Boer's Tarikh al-falsafa fi al-Islam [The history of philosophy in Islam], translated by Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi Abu Rida (which represents a book of its own for its valuable margins and footnotes).

Other important books include those of Yazji, Karam, Marhaba, and Jamil Saliba, in addition to Imam 'Abd al-Fattah Imam's brilliant translation of Etienne Gilson's *Ruh al-falsafa al-masihiyya fi al-'asr al-wasit* [The spirit of Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages]; Zaki Najib Mahmud and Muhammad Fathi al-Shaniti's translation of Bertrand Russel's *History of Western Philosophy* is also a notable contribution to

the Arabic philosophical library. Further texts include: the translation of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Henry Corbin's *History of Islamic Philosophy* by Nasir Marwa and Hasan Qubaysi. In 2010, Mahmud Sayyid Ahmad presented us a translation of William Kelly Wright's *History of Modern Philosophy*, which represents an unprecedented addition to the Arabic library. Lastly, Mahmud Sayyid Ahmad continues to work on his translation of Fredrick Copleston's voluminous *History of Philosophy*, edited by Imam 'Abd al-Fattah and in one volume by Habib al-Sharuni.

MONOGRAPHS ON PHILOSOPHERS IN THE ARABIC LANGUAGE (INCLUDING STRONG TRANSLATIONS)

'Abd al-Rahman Badawi's works: Sartre's Being and Nothingness [al-Wujud wa al-'adam], Herbert Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man [al-Insan dhu al-bu'd al-wahid), and Immanuel Kant; Mahmoud al-Khudayri's Magal fi al-manhaj li Descartes [Discourse on the method of Descartes]; Hasan Hanafi's Namadhij min al-falsafa al-masihiyia [Examples from Christian philosophy]; Muhammad Mahran's Falsafat Bertrand Russel [The philosophy of Bertrand Russel]; Mahmud Zaydan's Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, and William James; Muhammad Fathi al-Shaniti's Ta'sis metafizika al-akhlag [Grounding of the metaphysics of morals], Karl Jaspers' Madkhal ila al-falsafa [Introduction to philosophy]; Izzet Qurni's Muhawarat Aflaton [Plato's dialogues] (translated from the Greek); Imam 'Abd al-Fattah Imam's Falsafat Hegel [The philosophy of Hegel], al-Manhaj al-jadali inda Hegel [The dialectical method of Hegel], Dirasat Hegeliyya [Hegelian studies]; Yumna al-Khuli's Karl Popper; Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi Abu Rida's al-Kindi al-Nazzam; Alber Nasri Nadir's al-Monadolojiyya li leibniz; Muhammad 'Ali Abu Rayyan's al-Subrawardi; 'Uthman Amin's Descartes al-ta-amullat li Descartes [Meditations], Mabadi al-falsafa li Descartes [Descartes' first philosophy]; Najib Baladi's Pascal; al-Tahir ibn Gayza's Leibniz; 'Abd al-Ghaffar Makkawi's Albert Camus, Brecht; Fawqiyya Hasanayn's Abu al-Ma'ali al-fuwayni; Subhi al-Salih and Farid Jabr's solid translation of G. Anawati and Louis Gardet's The Philosophy of Religion between Islam and Christianity; Zakariyya Ibrahim's Bergson, Kant, and Hegel; Azmi Islam's, Itijahat fi al-falsafa al-mu'asira [Trends in contemporary philosophy] by John Locke and Ludwig Wittgenstein; Fawziyya Mikhail's Soren Kierkegaard; Mahmud Sayyid Ahmad's Dilthey, Thomas Reid.

Currently, the High Cultural Council of Egypt and the Arab Association for Translation have been actively working on new translations of Western philosophers such as: a translation of Copleston's encyclopedic work on the history of philosophy (the team of researchers working on this project are talented and experienced, under the leadership of Imam 'Abd al-Fattah and Mahmud Sayyid Ahmad); Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, translated by Ghanim Hana; Leibniz' An Essay on Metaphysics, translated by al-Tahir ibn Qayza in a critical edition; Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, translated in a critical edition with notes and introduction by Naji al-Awnali; George Canguilhem's Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science, translated by Muhammad ibn Sasi.

ORIGINAL WORKS IN PHILOSOPHY

'Abd al-Rahman Badawi: al-Zaman al-wujudi [Existential time], Dirasat wujudiyya [Studies in existentialism], Madkhal jadid ila al-falsafa [A new introduction to philosophy]; Yusuf Karam: al-'Aql wa al-wujud [Mind and being], al-Tabi'a wa ba'd al-tabi'a [Nature and metaphysics];

Zaki Najib Mahmud: Qisat 'aql [A story of reason], Nahwa falsafa 'amaliyya [Towards a philosophy of ethics], Khurafat al-mitafizika [The superstition of metaphysics], al-Sharq al-fannan [The artistic East], Tajdid al-fikr al-'Arabi [The renewal of Arabic thought], Hasad al-sinin [Envy of the age], al-Ma'qul wa la ma'qul [The reasonable and the unreasonable], Thagafatuna fi muwajahat al-'asr [Our culture confronts the age]; Tawfiq al-Tawil: Usus al-falsafa [Foundations of philosophy], Falsafat al-akhlaq [The philosophy of ethics]; Muhammad Abdullah Diraz: Dustur al-akhlaq fi al-Qur'an [Constitutional ethics in the Our'an]; Hasan Hanafi: al-Turath wa al-tajdid [Tradition and renewal], Mawqifuna min al-turath al-qadim [Our position with regard to ancient tradition], Fi al-fikr al-gharbi al-mu'asir [On contemporary Western thought], Dirasat Islamiyya [Islamic studies], Min al-'aqida ila al-thawra [From belief to revolution], Mugadima fi 'ilm al-istighrab [An introduction to the science of occidentalism]; Sadiq Jalal al-Idham: Nagd al-fikr al-dini [Critique of religious intellect]; 'Abdullah al-'Arawi: al-'Arab wa al-fikr al-tarikhi [Arabs and historical thinking], 'Azmat al-muthaqqafin al-Arab [The greatness of the cultured Arabs], al-Ideyolojiyya al-'Arabiyya al-mu'asira [Contemporary Arab ideology]; Hisham Ja'it: al-Shakhsiyya al-Arabiyya al-Islamiyya wa al-asir al-Arabi [The Arab-Islamic persona and the Arab destiny]; 'Uthman Amin: al-Jawaniyya [The inner philosophy]; Muhammad Bagr al-Sadr: Falsafatuna [Our philosophy]; Tayyib Tizini: Mashru ru'yat jadida li al-fikr al-Arabi fi al-'asr al-wasit [A new vision for Arabic thought in the Middle Age]; Nasif Nassar: al-Falsafa wa ma'rakat al-idiyolojiyya [Philosophy and the ideological struggle]; Utruhat fi tahlil al-idiyoljiyya wa tahrir al-falsafa min haymanatiha [Theses on analyzing ideology and liberating philosophy from its domination], Tariq al-istiqlal al-falsafi: sabil al-fikr al-carabi ila al-hurriyya wa al-ibda' [A way to philosophical independence: the path of Arabic philosophy towards freedom and creativity]; Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri: Nahnu wa al-turath [Tradition and us], Naqd al-'aql al-'Arabi [Critique of Arabic reason], Bunyat al-agl al-Arabi [The anatomy of Arabic reason], al-'Aql al-siyasi al-'Arabi [Arabic political reason]; Muhammad 'Aziz al-Hibbali: Dirasat fi al-shakhsaniyya al-waqi'iyya [Studies in real personalism], al-Shakhsaniyya al-Islamiyya [The Islamic personalism], Huriyya am taharrur? [Freedom or liberation?]; Zakariyya Ibrahim: Silsilat mushkilat falsafiyya [Philosophical problems series], Dirasat fi al-falsafa al-mu'asira [Studies in contemporary philosophy]; Fu'ad Zakariyya: Ara' naqdiyya fi mushkilat al-fikr wa al-thaqafa [Critical opinions on the problems of thought and heritage]; Majid Fakhri: Ab 'ad al-tajruba al-falsafiyya [The dimensions of philosophical experience]; Mahmud Rajab: Falsafat al-mir'a [Philosophy of the mirror]; Imam 'Abd al-Fattah Imam: al-Taghiya [The tyrant]; Fathi al-Treyki: Qira'at fi falsafat al-tanawu [Readings in the philosophy of diversity], Istratijiyat al-huwiyya [Strategies of identity]; Mustafa Sabri Efendi: Mawqif al-aql wa al-'ilm wa al-'alam min Rabb al-'alamin wa 'ibadibi al-mursalin [The position of the mind, science, and the world with respect to God and His messengers]; Muhammad Sa'id al-Buti: Naqd awham al-maddiyya al-jadaliyya [Critique of the delusions of dialectical materialism].

CRITICAL EDITIONS IN PHILOSOPHY

The following list includes a number of exemplary critical editions produced in the Arab world, but is in no sense exhaustive (name of the editor precedes listed titles):

Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi Abu Rida: Rasa'il al-Kindi al-falsafiyya [Philosophical treatises of al-Kindi], 2 vols; Muhammad Rashad Salim: critical edition of the works of Ibn Taymiyya, specifically the latter's Dar' ta'arud al-'aql wa al-naql [Evading the conflict of reason and revelation], 12 vols; 'Uthman Yahya: al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya [The Meccan openings], which represents the single most important work by Ibn 'Arabi; Abu al-'Ila 'Afifi: Fusus al-hikam [Jewels of wisdom] by Ibn 'Arabi, Mishkat al-anwar [The niche of lights] by Ghazali, al-Shifa' [The cure] and al-Mantiq wa al-burhan [Logic and demonstration] by Ibn Sina; Muhammad 'Ali Abu Rayyan: Hayakil al-nur [The forms of light] by Suhrawardi.

Abu al-Wafa al-Taftazani: Rasa'il ibn Sab'in [Works of Ibn Sab 'in]; Majid Fakhri: Rasa'il ibn Rushd [The epistles of Ibn Rushd]; 'Abd al-Karim 'Uthman: Sharh al-usul al-khamsa li al-qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar [A commentary on the five principles by the judge 'Abd al-Jabbar], Tathbit dala'il al-nubuwwa li al-qadi 'Abd al-fabbar [Establishing the proofs of prophethood], 2 vols; Nur al-Din Shariba: Tabagat al-Sufiyya li al-Sulami [The classes of the Sufis of al-Sulami]; Sabhan Khalifat: Magalat Yahya ibn 'Adi al-falsafiyya [The philosophical treatises of Yahya ibn 'Adi]; 'Ali 'Abd al-Wahid Wafi: Mugaddimat ibn Khaldun [The introduction of Ibn Khaldun]; 'Abd al-Rahman Badawi: al-Mantiq li Aristoteles [Aristotle's logic], 3 vols, al-Tabi'a li Aristoteles [Aristotle's natural philosophy], Shuruh 'ala Aristoteles mafqudatun fi al-Yunaniyya wa rasa'il ukhra [Lost Greek commentaries on Aristotle and other works], 'Uyun al-hikma li *Ibn Sina* [The substances of wisdom by Ibn Sina]; Ibrahim al-Kaylani: al-Basa'ir wa al-dhakha'ir li Abi Hayyan al-Tawhidi [The visions and the armaments of Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi], 2 vols; 'Ali Sami al-Nashhar: (with Su'ad 'Abd al-Raziq) Sawn al-mantiq wa al-kalam 'an fannay almantiq wa al-kalam li al-Suyuti [Suyuti's protection of kalam and logic from the arts of kalam and logic], (with 'Isam al-Din Muhammad 'Ali) Firaq wa tabaqat al-mu'tazila li al-Murtada wa al-qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar [The groupings and classes of the Mu^ctazilites by al-Murtada and the judge 'Abd al-Jabbar]; Khurshid Ahmad: Nuzhat al-arwah wa rawdat al-afrah fi tarikh al-hukama' wa al-falasifa li al-Shahrazuri [Biographies of the sages philosophers by Shahrazuri].

LEXICONS AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARABIC

The Majma al-lugha al-Arabiyya (Arabic Language Academy) of Cairo initiated the first attempts at creating philosophical lexicons as part of a larger series of terminological dictionaries with other disciplines. It was later collected and published independently under the title al-Mu jam al-falsafi [Philosophical dictionary].

Abu al-ʿIla ʿAfifi, Zaki Najib Mahmud, ʿAbd al-Rahman Badawi, and Muhammad Thabit al-Fendi produced the *Muʿjam al-falasifa* [Philosophers' lexicon] in French, English, and Arabic; Yusuf Karam and Yusuf Shalala: *al-Muʿjam al-falsafi* [Philosophical dictionary]; Murad Wahba: *al-Muʿjam al-falsafi* [Philosophical dictionary]; Zaki Najib Mahmud, Fu'ad Kamil, Jalal al-ʿAshri, and ʿAbd al-Rashid al-Sadiq collaborated in translating, and editing from the English, the *al-Mawsuʿa al-falsafiyya al-mukhtasara* [The abridged encyclopedia of philosophy]; George Tarabishi: *Muʿjam al-falasifa* [The philosophers' lexicon] (1987); Jamil Saliba: *al-Muʿjam al-falsafi bi al-alfaz al-ʿArabiyya wa al-Firansiyya wa al-Ingliziyya wa al-Latiniyya*

[An Arabic, English, and Latin philosophical dictionary], 2 vols (1982); Khalil Ahmad Khalil translated André Lalande's Philosophical Lexicon under the title Mawsu'at lalonde al-falsafiyya (revised by Ahmad 'Uwaydat); Samir Karam translated a Soviet Philosophical Lexicon (1980); Mu'in Ziyada and a team of researchers at al-Inma Arabic Institute produced al-Mawsu'a al-falsafiyya al-'Arabiyya [The encyclopedia of Arabic philosophy], 3 vols (1997); 'Abd al-Rahman Badawi: Mawsu'at al-falsafa [The encyclopedia of philosophy], 3 vols (1984), which includes also a number of studies on particular philosophical concepts and philosophical schools; Farid Jabr: Fi mu'jam al-Ghazali [A Ghazalian dictionary] (1970); 'Abd al-Mun' im al-Hifni: Mawsu'at al-falsafa wa al-falasifa [Dictionary of philosophy and philosophers], 2 vols, al-Mu'jam al-shamil li mustalahat al-falsafa [A comprehensive dictionary of philosophical terms] in Arabic, French, English, German, and Italian (2000), Mujam mustalahat al-Sufiyya [Dictionary of Sufi terminology] (1980); Jirar Jihami: Mawsu'at mustalahat al-falsafa 'inda al-'Arab [Encyclopedia of Arabic philosophical terminology] (1998), published as part of the Arabic and Islamic Terminology Series; Ahmad Nakri: Mawsu 'at mustalahat jami' al-'ulum [A terminological dictionary for all sciences] in Arabic, English, and French (1997); Samih Daghim: Mawsu'at mustalahat al-'ulum al-ijtima'iyya wa al-siyasiyya fi al-fikr al-'Arabi wa al-Islami [A terminological dictionary for the social and political sciences in Arabic and Islamic thought] (2000).

WHAT IS TAUGHT IN WESTERN UNIVERSITIES?

At this point we will briefly analyze what is taught in the universities of the world with respect to philosophy, how it is has been understood, and how it is being taught.

We will look now at the University of Western Ontario (UWO), and examine how philosophy is taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Firstly we note that they use the teaching-hours system, wherein the student takes classes of a minimum amount first at the preparatory level before entering courses at the 100, 200, 300, and 400 levels. Among these courses, some are mandatory while others are electives. There also exist courses of the 500-level, which is a bridge of sorts between the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Preparatory classes begin at the o-level, and students at this stage are made to take the following classes: Introduction to Philosophy; Critical Reasoning; Contemporary Questions; and Great Ideas. The duration of the lectures is two hours, in addition to an hour-long weekly meeting with each individual student.

Classes taught at the 100-level are as follows: Introduction to Environmental Philosophy; Evil; Introduction to Logic I; Ethics and Society; The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Magic and Oracles; Bio-Ethics; Death; Asian Philosophy; and Business Ethics.

At the 200-level, the following courses are offered: Introduction to Theory of Knowledge; Introduction to Ethics and Value-Theory; Ancient Philosophy; Early Modern Philosophy; Introduction to Logic II; Reproductive Ethics; Evolution of Mathematics; Philosophy of Science; Feminist Philosophy; History of Political Philosophy; Philosophy of Law; Media Ethics; Introduction to Philosophy of Mind; Ethics of Healthcare; Philosophy of Emotion; Introduction to Decision Analysis; Inference Formulas; and Business Relations Ethics.

The 300-Level: Beyond Ethics; Standard Ethics; Ethics of John Stuart Mill; Advanced Studies in the Philosophy of Mind; Philosophy of Cognition; Special Questions in Logic Theory; Epistemology; Philosophical Questions in Modern Biology; Foundations of Statistical Mechanics; Foundations of Quantitative Mechanics; Plato; Aristotelian Logic; Renaissance and Reformation Philosophy; Leibniz; and Berkeley.

The 400-Level: Epistemology of Pragmatism; Urban Ethics; The Philosophy of Peter Abelard; Ontological Proof; David Hume; Immanuel Kant; Philosophy of Law; Phenomenology; Trust and Certainty; and Epicureanism in Early Modern Philosophy.

Distance Education Courses: Introduction to Philosophy; Critical Thinking; Philosophy of Law; Bio-Ethics; Asian Philosophies; Business Ethics; Ethics and Values-Theory; and Inference Formulas.

GRADUATE STUDIES

The following courses are offered over two semesters respectively:

- I. Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mathematics; The Self and the Debate between Collins and Clarke; Epistemology of Plato; Kant; Ethical Revision; Research Assignment: Value Theory in the Twentieth Century; Consciousness and Change; Conditional Propositions; Descartes; and Philosophical Foundations of Modern Physics.
- II. Ontological Proof; Epicureanism in Early Modern Philosophy; Conscience and Conscientious Objection; Foundations of Law; History of Conscience from Plato to Descartes; Continuity, Discreteness, and Infinitesimals; Issues in Analytic Philosophy; Foundations of Relativity Theory; Contemporary Philosophy of Consciousness; and Idealist Mathematical Values in Physics.

Philosophical curricula in North America and Europe do not differ greatly from the program we have outlined above, except for the inclusion of other philosophical topics such as aesthetics, art, or other questions that reflect the general trend of the university or philosophical traditions. These include empiricism, rationalism, existentialism, pragmatism, and others, which also reflect the region they are in, such as England, Germany, France, and so forth.

All of these programs are exhaustive such that they cover almost everything that concerns humanity in their daily affairs. These curricula also do not include a course on "Research Methods", which programs in the Arab world make mandatory in spite of the lack of proper methods in reality. In contrast, while such a course is not offered in Western curricula, research methods have become something intrinsic to the very structure and practice of their education systems.

No doubt, the widening of scope in philosophical curricula are invaluable for developing the mind of the student of philosophy just as they open doors for them in the job market. In turn, the student thus is able to continue utilizing the philosophical tools acquired during his studies, which likewise reflect positively on the existent reality of a given society, collapsing the divisions that exist between what is said in the research papers of the academy and what is practiced outside of its walls on the streets of life.

ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY: THE IMPASSE AND THE SOLUTION

Islamic philosophy was the primary concern for the likes of Ahmad Mahmud Subhi and Majid Fakhri during the more recent decades. Subhi, for example, published a well-researched study on the different trends of Islamic philosophy in the Arab world during 1960–80, presented with others during the first Arab Philosophical Conference organized by the Jordanian University in 1983. Meantime, Fakhri composed a brilliant paper entitled *al-Dirasat al-falsafiyya al-ʿArabiyya* ["Arabic philosophical studies"], published in Khalil al-Jur's edited volume *al-Fikr al-falsafi al-ʿArabi fi mi'at sana* [Arabic philosophical thought in 100 years] by the American University of Beirut in 1962. Both of these studies rank high as pioneering studies in Islamic philosophy, and from which I benefited immensely.

It is the case that I am particularly enthusiastic about the possibilities for Islamic philosophy, and I assert that it may be one of our greatest strengths. We must, however, better prepare our specialists and students with the necessary tools in research, method, and editing. We must also improve our training in Eastern and Western languages such that the specialists are better able to understand and analyze the depths of Islamic philosophy in languages other than Arabic. In doing so, they can then present those works to readers of Arabic and other languages in a manner that refines their conceptualization; meantime, they will help recover the deserved place and prestige of that great heritage, contributing to the greater mosaic of human thought. This does not mean, however, that we should ignore the philosophical works of others, in research, study, and education. My intention here is to expand the scope of Islamic philosophy, for it is the best venue, and perhaps the only one, that can return some balance to discussions on the progress of human thought; for we see five centuries of Islamic history being summarized in a few measly pages in books on the history of philosophy.

What follows is my own humble attempt to identify points of weakness in this area in addition to possibilities for improvement:

Since the 1850s until today, there appeared a new interest in the study of Islamic philosophy that we may divide into five phases, with our current stage being the weakest of all.

- (1) The first phase saw the dominance of the early orientalists under the protection and patronage of colonial rule. These scholars sought to discover the links that allegedly existed between Islam as a religion and backwardness, decline, and ignorance. This approach may be best exemplified by Victor Cousin (d. 1847), Ernest Renan (d. 1892), and others.
- (2) The second phase saw the withdrawal of the orientalists from their original assertions regarding the backwardness of Islam, and thus began instead to place all their efforts into denying the originality of Islam or Islamic philosophy by claiming that philosophy, kalam, and Sufism were all taken from Greek thought, Indian thought, Persian thought, or Christianity. Some had gone so far as to even claim that Islamic law itself found its origins in Roman law. These efforts are seen in the likes of Nicholson, Goldziher, Von Kramer, Massignon, and others.

- (3) The third phase saw the first responses against orientalist scholarship in Islamic studies in the Arab world, who had at that point become the primary references in this field. The rise of Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq, as the first Arab, to the chair of Islamic philosophy in the most prestigious universities in the Arab world, represented a major shift in the field as he approached Islamic studies differently. He demonstrated the originality of Islamic thought in his work on the schools of kalam and how they related to the disciplines of law and legal methodology (fiqh and usul al-fiqh respectively).
- (4) During the fourth phase, a great deal of studies were published in the field of Islamic philosophy by the pioneering generation who carried on the work of Mustafa 'Abd al-Razig and they spread it across the Arab world. They edited and published a series of important manuscripts which prompted the reinvestigation into the relevant schools of thoughts and filled in the gaps on questions that were previously unknown. 'Ali Sami al-Nashhar established his own school during this era, whose students would appear in Egypt, Iraq, Algeria, and Morocco, all of whom would present compelling studies complimenting the work of their mentor. Abd al-Rahman Badawi might well represent a school on his own, combining vast knowledge of the comparative history of philosophy and his expertise in a number of ancient and modern languages. He edited and published a great deal of important manuscripts, and compared the original texts of the Greeks with the Arabic in the ancient and modern periods, in addition to composing a number of critical translations of the works of major orientalists. To their side was also Muhammad Abd al-Hadi Abu Rida and Mahmud Qasim; Western universities would also recruit scholars like Muhsin Mahdi, 'Abd al-Hamid Sabra, Seyyid Hossein Nasr, and others. The efforts of this generation set the foundations for what could have been a serious point of departure for future work.

One of the most important works of this period was published in 1963 in English, regarding the history of Islamic philosophy, edited by M. M. Sharif, the dean of the Islamic Cultural Institute in Lahore, Pakistan: A History of Muslim Philosophy with Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963). This editor collected the works of eighty of the greatest thinkers in the Islamic world in two large volumes. We remain in great need of such a work in the Arabic language, or at least its translation. It is particularly important in that it begins before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), covering developments in Islamic philosophy to the twentieth century.

(5) The fifth and weakest phase began in the late 1960s—the tree that began to bear fruit previously began to show signs of deterioration. Specifically, a feud arose between two diametrically opposed groups, with one weaker group in between them calling for reasonable discourse. One group has taken to glorifying Islamic civilization and rejecting all others, while the other sees no way forward except with Western thought and ideology. Thus, all subsequent works in philosophy had become contaminated with the following impediments:

First: A one-dimensional vision shared. For example, some researchers still approach the question of Islamic sects from a purely sectarian perspective, and proceed to attack and criticize all groups and schools of thought as being deviant to the exception of their own.

Second: An incapacity to understand the spirit of the age (the social, cultural, and political climate) and its effects on language and terminology, and the usage of new vocabulary to describe systems, movements, and concepts of a different time period.

Third: A propensity to attack others with a ready-made arsenal of labels when discussing the different strains of Islamic philosophical thought.

Fourth: A propensity to use value-laden terms with ideological import to categorize all of the various Islamic philosophical schools, be they political, existential, gnostic, or moral. Here the distinction between thought, that is, philosophy, and ideology comes to bear; by virtue of its nature, ideology merely reflects the social conditions or class-based, value-laden labels such as reactionary (raj'iyya), progressive (taqadumiyya), left and right, while philosophy, itself being the product of an age or civilization, does not accept these categories or phrases. In general, it does not escape the critical mind that the proponents of such behaviors are in fact hiding a number of basic assumptions: religious thought is reactionary, and its opposite is progressive or revolutionary.

Fifth: Notably in the past few decades, most researchers in Islamic philosophy do not possess the requisite knowledge of the Islamic sciences, and are unaware of the intrinsic relationship that exists between these sciences and philosophy, so much that such a proposition ought to be necessarily known in the field of Islamic philosophy.

Sixth: Another one of the features of the past few decades has been an unfounded boldness of the pen, and a rushed immaturity visible in the poor quality of their publications with the goal of promotion to the detriment of diligence. This phase is also attributed with a loss of the necessary patience and passion required to produce good work, resulting in flimsy academic publications leaving serious readers longing for a better tomorrow. Furthermore, what was once a critical edition of a manuscript, has now become the mere transmission of words from yellow pages to white pages.

HOW DO WE SALVAGE WHAT REMAINS?

The following points may be a way forward:

First: Students and researchers of Islamic philosophy must be equipped with the requisite training in the Islamic sciences, especially usul al-fiqh (Islamic legal methodology), tafsir (exegesis), fiqh (law), maqasid al-shari'a (legal philosophy), for these are invaluable sources of strength in this area of research, and represent the proper point of departure for serious contributions to human thought.

Second: The necessity of proper foreign language training. This will open doors to a wide variety of sources on subject matter and method, especially since studies in Islamic philosophy composed in European languages represent the best works available today. It would be detrimental for the researcher to not give due attention to these studies.

Third: The utmost necessity to open doors to scholarly productions from modern Iran and Turkey, be they in Persian or Turkish, or via translation. Both countries have made notable advances in research methods and subject matter in a manner far more impressive than what comes out of Arab presses.

Fourth: The necessity to free researchers from sectarian or traditionalist behavior in the interest of objectivity and scholarly integrity.

Fifth: There is a need for training in how to work in research groups. The nature of this age is resistant to individual work, just as Islamic ethics promote group efforts. All this of course must be done in the context of a well-thought and planned effort to revive the heritage in a manner that is critical, scientific, and in accordance with the proper methods of editing and working with manuscripts.

Sixth: The necessity to liberate philosophical studies from political allegiances, such that they can ascend to the level of real philosophy and avoid the pits of ideology.

Lastly, we need to keep in mind that it is simply false to believe that Islam has come with the solutions to all humanity's problems and questions. If that were the case, *ijtihad* would not be the third source of law in Islam; there is also an inference that can be derived from this of the rank of *ijtihad* in Islam, as there does not exist in the Qur'an and Sunna answers to nascent, serious questions of religious import (varying with time and place), let alone contemporary questions of politics, finance, and other areas of human activity. There is no escape from using what is available to us in areas that others excel at, and Islam has encouraged us to do just that as our forebears had done, avoiding centuries of decay and degeneracy.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE OR TOWARDS AN AGENDA OF RESEARCH

The worrisome present day lived by the Arab individual, who is also afflicted with a loss of hope in what they expected from the best thinkers towards revival, has compelled us to place our hopes in the school of the future for research and scholarly output. For it to distinguish itself and carve new paths forward, I humbly ask the executors of this project to take into consideration the following:

First: Strong emphasis must be placed on method and epistemology; for there can be no real knowledge without them. The early Muslims knew this well, and thus, delving into the tradition must also mean delving into the methods of that tradition.

Second: An open mind to what has been developed and innovated by Western thought. The new school must also acquire a grasp of the languages of research and methodology, and expand their circles to include Western scholarship with respect to peer review and scholarly exchange.

Third: Priority must be given to researching what is known as "Applied Philosophy" as a living medium to bring philosophy to the average citizen.

Fourth: The inclusion of modern questions into the study of philosophy such as: philosophy of mind, artificial intelligence, philosophical problems in modern biology, the philosophy of science, and decision analysis.

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Fifth: Attention must shift from teaching the history of philosophy to the teaching of philosophy itself, such that the subjects of metaphysics, epistemology, or ethics can be taught completely as subjects in themselves, each with their specific methods. This in turn will open new windows of research, and promote philosophical innovation and ingenuity.

Sixth: An emphasis should also be placed on philosophy of science, such that philosophy can maintain its links with developments in science and technology and consequently play its proper role in those areas. The same must be done with the history of science.

Seventh: An openness must be displayed with respect to what is produced by Iranian and Turkish scholarship among others by placing bridges of cooperation between Arab scholars and Arab institutions towards their counterparts elsewhere.

Eighth: Schools must avert sectarianism and dogmatism, and establish the methods conducive to achieving this.

Ninth: There must be a culture of vigilance within the academy in order to protect scholarly integrity and independence, and avoid political contaminants.

Tenth: A retrieval of the works and studies produced in the pioneering generation of Arabic philosophy in the twentieth century. Without making use of their work, we lose the momentum and accumulation of knowledge within our institutions, let alone our ethical sensibility.

Eleventh: They must make use of experienced educators and thinkers in the area of philosophy to save themselves time and effort. Examples of such figures include: Hasan Hanafi, Hasan ʿAbd al-Hamid, Imam ʿAbd al-Fattah Imam, Saʿid ibn Saʿid, Mahmud Sayyid Ahmad, Salim Yafut, and Ahmad Madhi.

THE NEED FOR METHOD AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Due to the undeniable difference effected by proper methods and epistemology in forming the minds of students on the one hand, and understanding the subject matter on the other, I will dedicate the following section to highlight the importance of method and epistemology.

Epistemological thinking begins whenever a crisis afflicts any given science, which ultimately stems from gaps and deficiencies in method. For this reason, Jean Piaget—one of the foremost epistemologists of the modern period—affirms the importance of method in epistemological studies, such that one can understand thought and reality harmoniously. One can also properly read and understand the contradictions present therein, and learn if that thing is necessary in the natural, human, and social sciences. Generally speaking, the necessity of proper methods in the areas is even greater in Islamic philosophy, be it ancient or modern.

The past three decades witnessed a series of notable developments in research methodology in humanity and social sciences, in a concerted effort to reach higher standards of objectivity and agreement among humanity. Scholars of religious thought had likewise submitted to these modern methods in an attempt to dissolve internal disputes and contradictions, to transcend themselves towards the spaciousness of objective thought. They also sought to find the roots of weakness,

static thought, degeneracy, violence, and extremism, from which they could begin to solve disputes between practitioners of different religions, and indeed, between the different groups and sects within the same religion. These conflicts have presented philosophers and thinkers within the humanities and the various religious traditions with a serious challenge unprecedented in human history. As a result, several sciences and methods developed which focused their efforts in solving this "problem"; sociologists and anthropologists deal with it as though it were a social phenomenon, and like all other phenomena, it is subject to unlimited research and analysis. Eventually this led to the creation of the disciplines of the sociology of religion and the anthropology of religion. The philosophers found the matter as a problem of knowledge at the level of the text or scripture, the contents, concepts, and limits of knowledge: certainty, suspicion, and impossibility, from which they created the discipline of the epistemology of religion. With the aid of anthropology, historians created the discipline of the history of religion in order to analyze religion as a historical phenomenon, from which yet another discipline arose: the comparative history of religions.

All of these disciplines succeeded in areas and failed in others. As for their success, it can be evidently seen in the establishment of strong theoretical foundations that strive towards higher standards of objectivity, limiting the entry of bias into their studies. As a result, they covered serious ground in understanding the realities of corruption, static thought, intolerance, violence, the rise and fall of different groups and religious sects, and the interrelations between religion, the state, and politics.

As for their failings, it is in the manner with which they treat all religions in the same way, irrespective of whether or not they are revealed or purely the result of human efforts, such that both types are assumed to have the exact same roots. Thus, all these religions evolved contrarily to one another due to the respective cultures they evolved in, and that religious texts are relative such that they are the products of human society, which imposes itself upon it and not the reverse.

Therefore, we must refer to certain foundational axioms, such that knowledge can again be reliable. Here I am referring to the necessity for any given method to correspond to the nature of its subject matter. If this is not taken into account, the results will necessarily be deficient, and the conclusions skewed. So, for example, we have no use for rhetoric in mathematics, nor do we have use for sensory data in theology, in the same way that we do not need syllogisms in studying rhetoric.

Here, our subject matter contains divinely revealed scripture, upon which human understanding and sciences are then built, in addition to the human reality that is formed in the wake of this human knowledge. Thus the special attribute of revelation is such that human reason works within the boundaries of revelation. Consequently, the intellectual products of this type of human reasoning necessitate continuous observation, taking into consideration time and place, such that its conclusions correspond to the reality that it studies and not the reverse.

It is especially for this reason that we can understand the importance of epistemology and research methods. Students equipped with this knowledge will have the critical capacity necessary in order to take what is positive and correspondent in the humanities, and the modern social sciences, in addition to utilizing what is relevant from the methodologies of *usul al-fiqh* as understood by the scholars of the Sharia. These scholars established the value of having strong,

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coherent methods that make room for what is variable and what is static, along with placing its lens over the dialectic that exists between the text, human understanding, and reality, realizing at an early phase in its development that when a science changes or evolves, so does its method.

The coherent method, therefore, is a method that has in itself the capacity for evolution, which bypasses the problems inherent in dogmatism and rigidity. From there, this innovative method can push the enlightened and believing mind forward with all the strength necessary to create a vibrant civilization, proving the universal truism that relates the strength of thought and method with the rise of nations, and the weakness of its methods to their decline and downfall.