

American University in Cairo

AUC Knowledge Fountain

Faculty Book Chapters

1999

Tanwir and Islamization: Rethinking the Struggle over Intellectual Inclusion in Egypt

Mona Abaza

The American University in Cairo AUC, moabaza@aucegypt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_book_chapters



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Islamic Studies Commons](#), and the [Near Eastern Languages and Societies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

APA Citation

Abaza, M. (1999). *Tanwir and Islamization: Rethinking the Struggle over Intellectual Inclusion in Egypt*. American University in Cairo Press. , 85-117

https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_book_chapters/1002

MLA Citation

Abaza, Mona *Tanwir and Islamization: Rethinking the Struggle over Intellectual Inclusion in Egypt*. American University in Cairo Press, 1999. pp. 85-117

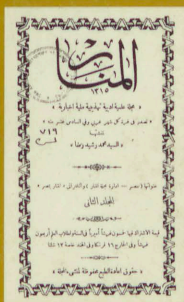
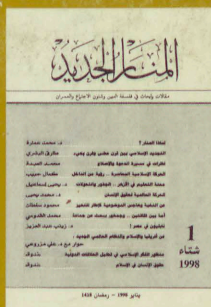
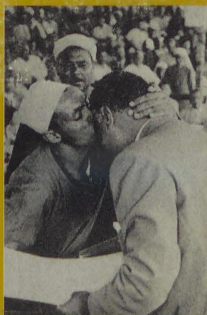
https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_book_chapters/1002

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by AUC Knowledge Fountain. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Book Chapters by an authorized administrator of AUC Knowledge Fountain. For more information, please contact fountadmin@aucegypt.edu.

Discourses in Contemporary Egypt

Politics and Social Issues

Edited by
Enid Hill



Contributors:
Mona Abaza
Nadje Sadeg Al-Ali
Iman A. Hamdy
Noha El-Mikawy
Reem Saad



CAIRO PAPERS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE
Volume 22, Number 4

TANWIR AND ISLAMIZATION: RETHINKING THE STRUGGLE OVER INTELLECTUAL INCLUSION IN EGYPT

MONA ABAZA¹

Il est impossible, dans l'état où nous nous trouvons, de connaître certainement que la vérité qui nous paraît (je parle des vérités particulières de la Religion, et non pas des propriétés des nombres ou des premiers principes de métaphysique, ou des démonstrations de géométrie) est la vérité absolue; car tout ce que nous pouvons faire est d'être pleinement convaincus que nous tenons la vérité absolue, que nous ne nous trompons point, que ce sont les autres qui se trompent, toutes marques équivoques de vérités, puisqu'elles se trouvent dans les païens et dans les hérétiques les plus perdus. Il est donc certain que nous ne saurions discerner à aucune marque assurée ce qui est effectivement vérité quand nous le croyons.... Un Pape est aussi satisfait de sa religion, un Turc de la sienne, un Juif de la sienne, que nous de la notre... Les plus fausses religions ont leurs martyrs. Leurs austérités incroyables, un esprit de faire des prosélytes qui surpasse bien souvent la charité des orthodoxes et un attachement extrême pour leurs cérémonies superstitieuses.² Pierre Bayle, (1647-1706),

*Les droits de la 'Conscience Errante' XXIII
SIÈCLE, Collection Littéraire, Lagarde et
Michard, 1965.*

¹ I have certainly profited from many discussions and ideas that are circulating today in Cairo. I wish to thank Iman Hamdy (AUC), Nabil Abd-al-Fattah and Mohammed al-Sayyid Said from al-Ahram. I also wish to thank Iman Farag from the CEDEJ in Cairo, Enid Hill for doing a wonderful editing job, and finally, my dear friend Shahnaz Rouse for our intellectual wanderings in Cairo.

² Translation: It is impossible, in the condition that we find ourselves, to know for certain that the truth that we perceive (I speak of particular truths of Religion and not of the properties of numbers or of first principles of metaphysics, or of demonstrations of geometry) is the absolute truth; for all that we can do is to be fully convinced that we hold absolute truth, that we do not delude ourselves, that it is the others who delude themselves about all doubtful signs of truths found among the pagans and the most disgraced heretics. It is certain that we cannot distinguish any dependable sign that is actually truth when we believe it.... A Papist is as satisfied with his religion, a Turk with his, a Jew with his, as we are with our own.... The most false religions have their martyrs. Their incredible austerity, a spirit of proselytising that quite often surpasses the benevolence of the orthodox, and an extreme attachment to their superstitions.

Tanwir (enlightenment), *hiwar* (dialogue), *huquq al-insan* (human rights) are catchwords that have been on the agenda of Egyptian secular intellectuals, as well as the Islamists, during the nineties. Much discussion has taken place in North Africa in particular in relation to the growing confrontation there in recent years between Islamists and various governments. It is thus no coincidence that these concepts have filtered into government circles. How *tanwir* in particular is disputed, appropriated by conflicting political factions, and negotiated is one concern of this essay. I will also attempt to associate the issue of *tanwir* with the fight over inclusion of the Islamist camp and its various tendencies in the intellectual debates.

A researcher at the Center for Strategic Studies recently published an article in the semi-official newspaper, *al-Ahram*, stating that the Islamic *Jam'at al-islamiyya* groups, accused of committing violent terrorist acts, had declared, on 25 March 1999, that they were giving up violence in politics (*al-Ahram*, May 10, 1999). In commenting on this event, Dīa Eddīn Rashwan argues that it was a historical turning point, despite the fact that the *Jihad* groups still persist in using violence as a means of protest. Could there be a reconciliation between the Islamists and the state that is in the making? Can one speak of consensus? Can one still speak of possibility of dialogue among opposing factions? The recent jailing of the American University professor Saad Eddīn Ibrahim in summer 2000 for treason and spying allegations is a case in point. It is beyond this paper to dwell on the reasons behind Ibrahim's jailing. His status as holding a dual Egyptian/American nationality led to the intervention of the American Embassy in Cairo, while there were political campaigns defending him via electronic mail. Ibrahim's double nationality has been for a large section of Egyptian intellectuals, who considered that he got the best of both worlds, a source of discontent. Perhaps his international success and skills in attracting foreign funds explains why he has been under so much attack. But apparently, his arrest was part of a general curtailing of NGO activities. Last year a law was enacted forcing all NGO's to register and to report any foreign financing. Whether Ibrahim is innocent or an agent and collaborator of Western powers is not the issue. What is worth the attention here is the massive attack launched by leftists against him, both Nasserites and nationalist

intellectuals, in the press. They slandered him for his political interactions with Israel and the Ibn Khaldun Center for being funded by foreign institutions, but Egypt maintains official normalized relations with Israel and the state publicly acknowledges foreign research funding. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Ibrahim's stand, his personal behavior and controversial research orientations, the incident has revealed one thing: that the Egyptian intelligentsia is suffering from the authoritarian legacy of Nasserism as it resorts to ancient tactics of condemning the enemy's integrity through *al-takhwif* (frightening the other) or *al-takhwin* (condemning for collaboration and treason). A disappointed old Marxist, who disagrees with Ibrahim's policies, expressed his pessimism of any dialogue being possible in such a hysterical atmosphere.

The remarks I present in this essay are impressionistic and convey contradictory messages. Chaos would seem to best describe state management of the religious discourse and inconsistency in its dealing with Islam. *Tanwir* is the best word to describe the discourses.

Tanwir

For many Arab intellectuals *tanwir* began approximately two hundred years ago. *Tanwir* and *nahda* (the Arab renaissance) are terms often used synonymously. Early Arab thinkers and intellectuals such as Abderahman al-Qawaqibi, Jaml al-Din al-Afghani, Shibli Shummayyil, Salama Musa, Qassem Amin, Taha Husayn, and Mansur Fahmi are associated with this movement. Rifa' al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), who was among the first Azharites to study abroad, is today referred to in the discourse of Egyptian modernity as a founding father of *tanwir*. Tahtawi's sojourn for five years in Paris from 1826 to 1831 produced a description of the manners and customs of the French that epitomizes crossing boundaries to bridge tradition with modernity. His perceptions of the French as well as his pioneer work in translation stimulated thinking concerning the Other. An acute observer of the French enlightenment, this Azharite read Racine, Condillac, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. He translated Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois*, Rousseau's *Contrat social*, and some writings of Voltaire (Hanafi 1990, 92-93). It is no coincidence that Mohammed 'Immara, one of the leading intellectuals belonging to the Islamic trend in contemporary Egypt

who will be discussed further in this essay, wrote a book on Tahtawi the title of which defined him as "the pioneer of enlightenment in the modern age" (°Immara 1984). Like other figures, Tahtawi has today become a source of dispute and interpretation by secular and Islamic intellectuals alike, but both camps use the same word, *tanwiri* (man of the enlightenment), to define Tahtawi.

Tanwir also has to do with an awakening that was part of the cultural and socio-political encounters with the West, the spread of secular institutions, and the imposition of a new mode of life. The Syrian secular thinker, Sadeq Jalal al-°Azm, commenting on how in recent years *tanwir* has been under harsh attacks, argues that since reformism resulted from this movement, such critique seems problematic and too narrowly linked with nationalism. For him and many other secular intellectuals, the movement of *tanwir* was born with the *tanzimat* movement in Turkey in the 1830s. The knowledge that the Ottomans had gathered about military and scientific developments in the West, according to al-°Azm, was a crucial factor in the shaping of reforms. This reformism occurred in tandem with the formation of middle classes who encouraged reformist ideologies (al-°Azm 1998).

During the late eighties in the Paris publication *al-Yawm al-sabi°*, *tanwir* was associated with the many questions raised in the dialogue between the Syrian intellectual, Georges Tarabishi, and the Moroccan academic, Mohammed °Abid al-Jabri. During the nineties, the dialogue continued in various other Arab papers. It ended pathetically with condemnations of each other by al-Jabri and Tarabishi (Labib 1998:333-358). For al-Jabri, the movement of *tanwir* had been imported and imposed since the French invasion, an argument that became fashionable among many intellectuals whenever the issue of identity and cultural invasion was discussed. Al-Jabri's reasoning is similar to that of Tariq al-Bishri's notion of *dakhil* (intrusion) into culture. Al-Jabri considers concepts such as reason, freedom, equality, citizenship, and human rights to be alien to the Arabic language. According to him, they are all notions derived from the European enlightenment which have not yet taken root in the Middle East (al-Jabri 1990: 97).

Al-Jabri's position was that Tarabishi was a Christian by faith and therefore not entitled to criticize his project of inner reformation of Arabic thought deriving from Islamic premises and the Islamic heritage. Tarabishi

replied to this criticism by insisting upon his secular stand. Al-Jabri then insisted that Tarabishi was not entitled to criticize him, considering the fact that Tarabishi had never obtained a PhD and did not work in the academic field. Tarabishi argued that al-Jabri's works contain serious misinterpretations of Islamic texts, as well as wrong citations, and truncated, out of context exegeses. This so-called dialogue instigated a wide reaction from various intellectuals and comments from the Arab World (Labib 1998). These skirmishes are very revealing in that they raise serious questions about dialogues in the future among *enlightened* and liberal intellectuals, not to mention the mounting clashes in Islamist-secular encounters.

The argument of al-Jabri and others that Arab enlightenment is an intrusion, an imported movement, and therefore has never taken root in Arab societies leaves a lot to be desired. Was not the Enlightenment in France tremendously indebted to the discoveries from travel and encountering other cultures? Travel accounts of missionaries in the Far East, India, Turkey, and Persia activated critical thinking about the relativity of other cultures and about their own. The Orient became a counter-image, a mirror for both self critique and the assertion of difference, as in Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*. Should not the same comment apply to the Egyptians who spent time in Europe and observed the manners and customs of the Europeans?

The discourse of *tanwir*, similar to that of secularism, is multi-layered and straining to be heard as a stand against Western hegemony. Westernization and the dangers of cultural invasion have, in the last fifteen years, become topics of extensive debate among Egyptian and Arab intellectuals also. In the Western world, following the Salman Rushdie affair, issues of identity and the hybridity of cultures have been widely discussed. Indeed, the discourse on hybridity seems related to cultural invasion and the mounting racism and parochialism in Europe. A case in point is the last referendum in Germany about holding dual nationality and the sweeping popular reaction against it.

Homi Bhabha questions the continuing eurocentricity in culture and theory but remarks that "cultural difference" can turn into a struggle devoid of space or power. He writes:

Montesquieu's Turkish Despot, Barthes' Japan, Kristeva's China, Derrida's Nambikwara Indians, Lyotard's Cashinahua pagans are part of

this strategy of containment where the Other text is forever the exegetical horizon of difference, never the active agent of articulation. The Other is cited, quoted, framed, illuminated, encased in the shot/reverse-shot strategy of a serial of enlightenment. Narrative and cultural politics of difference become the closed circle of interpretation. (Bhaba 1994:31)

This argument of Homi Bhabha, who currently resides in the United States, could be interpreted as being in itself a power strategy, an attempt to fight for his own space in the world of Western academia. However, the analogy with the controversy in Egypt about enlightenment and the West is revealing. That *tanwir* is an imported concept, used in a reverse power struggle against the West, is not a novel argument. What interests us here is how reverse parochialism portrays a reaction, a stance, an internal power struggle, whereby local intellectuals attempt to redefine and relocate themselves in the intellectual field.

For many Egyptians today, the word *tanwir* brings to mind the official government campaign concerning "a hundred years of enlightenment" that was accompanied by the reprinting of the works of the early *nahda* thinkers. This campaign sought to revive the Liberal Age.

Tanwir was also a campaign promoted first by secular intellectuals to counteract the ideology of the Islamists. Then the government borrowed it as a way of co-opting secular intellectuals while they used their discourse as an instrument to face both the growing Islamization within the state, represented by the institution of al-Azhar, and the Islamist opposition. Enlightenment was meant to convey an image in opposition to the dark and fanatic forces of Islamic fundamentalism. *Tanwir* became synonymous with being progressive and open-minded to new ideas. However, the use of *tanwir* seems to have been stretched to include various stands of public figures as well as their critics, and thus includes several variants.

Many in Egypt today associate *tanwir* with the official government discourse. For instance, since Shaykh Tantawi's appointment as Shaykh al-Azhar, the press described him as enlightened and someone who fought underdevelopment, fanaticism, and religious extremism. Tantawi rhymes with Tahtawi as Saad Eddin Ibrahim, sociologist at the American University in Cairo and Director of the Ibn Khaldun Center, has reminded us. Ibrahim

placed Tantawi and Tahtawi on an equal footing, as *tanwiris* (Ibrahim 1998).

After the last Population Conference in Cairo, Shaykh Tantawi's position was interpreted as having been increasingly progressive on women's issues. He expressed serious disagreement with Gad al-Haq, the late *Shaykh al-Azhar*. Recently, Tantawi seems to have faced strong opposition from the various other segments of the institution of al-Azhar after he dissolved the Scholars' Front of al-Azhar. In fact, a lawsuit was filed against him by the Scholars' Front, which disagreed with Tantawi on the issue of earning interest from bank deposits (*al-Ahram Weekly*, 25 February 1999). In recent years the Front has gained a reputation for condemning intellectuals for *kufir* (being an unbeliever). Even the Sorbonne-trained philosopher Hassan Hanafi was not spared from such attacks.

A *gam'iyyat al-tanwir* (*tanwiri* group or association) was founded by the late Farag Foda who was assassinated in 1992 by Islamists. It publishes a journal called *al-Tanwir* that is headed today by Saad Eddin Ibrahim. Interestingly, the first deputy director (*na'ib al-ra'is al-awal*) of the journal happens to be the famous Egyptian tycoon, Naguib Sawires. However, for many, *tanwir* entails negative connotations in that it has been associated with Napoleon's conquest of Egypt and is thus imbued with *la mission civilisatrice* (the civilizing mission) ideology. It should not be forgotten that the recent commemoration of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt stirred heated debates in 1998 about whether such an event should be worthy of so much attention in a country like Egypt which has a long history of British colonization (see Enan 1998). Would the Indians celebrate the date of British occupation of India? This was the question raised by many in relation to the French-Egyptian post-colonial relations of the nineties.

The issue was initially raised by Nabil Abdel Fatah, researcher at the al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies, in an article about Egyptian French relations published in *al-Dustur* in 1995. Opinions differed widely even among the leftist and nationalist camps, and very little consensus about the commemoration was reached. It mainly stirred a heated debate leading to an extensive amount of writing in the Egyptian press that reached the impressive number of 86 articles between 30 January and 8 May 1998. Shafiq (1998:7-12) presents a good summary of the issue of the commemoration of Napoleon's invasions in Cairo and the controversies it

stirred. The philosopher Fu'ad Zakariyyah has compared the paradox of Napoleon's invasion as an encounter with the Other that led to self-awakening to the Egyptian campaign in Yemen during the sixties, which he presents as a demonstration of Hegelian dialectical understanding of history (see Shafiq 1998). This analysis stirred wrath in many circles. Likewise *tanwir* has been subject to harsh criticism in recent years since some consider that the project collapsed because it was linked to Arab nationalism and the renaissance movement. *Tanwir* has also been adopted by the Islamic trend to claim authenticity in opposition to secular writers.

Reading the Islamist-Secular Confrontation

Tariq al-Bishri and Mohammed 'Immara have been labelled "leftist neo-Islamists" (Salvatore 1997:231, quoting Ayubi). Western observers have referred to them, rightly or wrongly, as "Islamic liberals" (Binder 1988). Mohammed 'Immara has advocated the Islamic middle path (*al-wassatiyya al-islamiyya*) claiming that this position would counterbalance the extreme exploitation in the Western capitalist system. The middle part according to 'Immara attempts to create an equilibrium between religion and life (*din wa dunya*) and between spirit and matter (*al-ruh wal-madda*). My concern here is to question the very definition of Islamic liberalism and to analyze the evolution and borrowing of the use of language in the Islamist-secular confrontation.

In the pages that follow, I will read 'Immara's recent writings as mirror texts, vis-a-vis the secularists. Comparing *al-Manar al-jadid* of the Islamists to the journal *al-Tanwir* of secular direction, one realizes that the themes discussed are identical but lead to diametrically opposite conclusions. My argument is that the recent debates in Egypt about enlightenment (*tanwir*), which were mainly promoted by government circles to counteract the Islamic opposition, have sharpened the dichotomy between secular intellectuals, the state, and the Islamists. Through analyzing the language of *al-Manar al-jadid* it is possible to argue that the Islamist protagonists have now developed a new tactic, namely the borrowing of language similar to that of the secularists in order to counter their arguments.

Why is this so? I interpret the fight between these two camps as being over inclusion, that is, the fight for recognition of the Islamic camp. Former

Marxists and leftists—like Tariq al-Bishri and ‘Adil Husayn—who have expressed sympathies in the last two decades for the Islamic camp, are today attempting to discuss Islam using modern secular language, such as the necessity of dialogue between opposing camps, the importance of human rights and civil society, in order to reverse the arguments of secularist writers. For example, the issue of human rights can certainly be considered paramount for the contributors of *al-Manar al-jadid*.

At the same time, Western representations of human rights by human rights organizations would seem to maintain double standards. In a recent article in *al-Ahram*, Anouar Abdel Malek has stressed the hypocritical stand of the international community and its discourse on human rights. In particular, the kidnapping of the Kurdish leader, Ocalan, is a case in point of the way the Western world deals with the Kurdish question and how it turns its back on the tragedy of the Iraqi people. Abdel Malek’s vision, although very cogent in his condemnation of Western double standards, stresses an international American Zionist plot against the progressive forces of the Third World (*al-Ahram*, Feb. 23, 1999). For the contributors of *al-Manar al-jadid*, double standards are measured by how these organizations defend homosexuality on the same grounds as that of the freedom of religious expression.

The condemnation is also leveled against these organizations for defending an apostate (Cairo University philosopher Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd) while failing to protect those who attack secularists for insulting religion and religious beliefs. These organizations are seen as having defended an intellectual who has committed blasphemy against Islam and the *Qur’an* under cover of the freedom of expression while they would oppose any intellectual who is against other confessional groups or against the secularists and liberals. They point out that polygamy in the West is considered a violation of human rights while free sexual relations (which amount to concubinage) in the West is not, and which, according to Muhammed Yahya (1998:67-68) reveals the ambiguity of the term.

Given the double standards in politics and organizations, one has to give credit to the Egyptian human rights organizations which have raised the issue of attack on the freedom of expression by the growing power of al-Azhar recently in censoring so-called decadent or sexually promiscuous literary works which has reached the number of 169 (Labib 1998:351).

Certainly the underground Islamists and al-Azhar have much in common once it comes to considering what is morally decadent. It is no coincidence that the year 1988 was marked by a serious confrontation between the Egyptian human rights organizations and the *Majma' al-buhuth al-islamiyya* (Islamic Research Group) of al-Azhar which censored the book of al-Qimni, *Rabb al-Zaman* (The Lord of Destiny). The Egyptian human rights organizations have strongly criticized the censorship role of al-Azhar as seriously curtailing and threatening the freedom of expression and beliefs (Ibn Khaldun Center 1998). Another positive point that needs to be taken into consideration is the strong condemnation by Egyptian human rights organizations in previous years of the violence Islamists were subject to in Egyptian jails.

Al-Manar al-Jadid

Before providing a reading of *al-Manar al-jadid*, the significance of its appealing title must first be mentioned. *Al-Manar al-jadid* is a reference to Rashid Rida's journal, *al-Manar* (The Lighthouse), which was published in Cairo from 1896 to 1936. When Rashid Rida founded the magazine, he did so in order to spread the ideas of his teacher, the Islamic reformer Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). *Al-Manar* first appeared as a weekly and then became a monthly periodical. The journal originated as a vehicle for discussion of Abduh's interpretation of the *Qur'an*. Rida was concerned with two major problems: the decadence of the Muslim World and the danger of Western domination (Shahin 1993:9). According to Shahin, Rida's main concern was to reconcile those who sought to preserve old customs and traditions with those who wanted to adopt modern education based on free thinking. Rida's main effort with *al-Manar* was to promote the idea that Islam was not in contradiction with modernity, science, reason, or civilization (ibid. 10). The main themes in *Al-Manar* were unity and reform. If Rida appears rather accommodating in reconciling modernity and Islam, the agenda of *al-Manar al-jadid* is different. Shahin's stimulating reading of Rida portrays him as a sophisticated scholar who distinguished between modernization and westernization.

In contrast, *al-Manar al-jadid* takes a different bent, and asserts sharper East-West dichotomies. Rida's novelty—a point that is often forgotten by

the promoters of *al-Manar al-jadid*—was his great admiration for the Japanese model as offering a blend of solutions between old and new (Shahin 1993:96). His main concern was how to enter the age of modernity. Is this the case for the promoters of *al-Manar al-jadid*? It seems to me that they take an opposite stand. Rida maintained a positivist and scientist approach to Western science and culture, that may have had limitations but revealed his faith in progress and thus offered the possibility of cross-cultural interaction with the West. The promoters of *al-Manar al-jadid* seem to be rather concerned with dichotomizing cultures into the *intruding* and the *authentic* within the confines of a discourse on “cultural invasion.”

Al-Manar al-jadid put out four issues with Muhammad ‘Immara as the editor in chief, with the first issue appearing in January and the fourth in October, 1998. The opening article of the first issue written by ‘Immara is worth attention, specifically how these intellectuals of recent times have appropriated the jargon developed by the secularists such as the term *tanwir*, claiming that they are the ‘authentic’ *tanwiris*, as in the opening editorial article, “The Story of *al-Manar al-jadid*.” In his editorial, ‘Immara stresses the fact that the journal was established with independent funds. He claims it is an autonomous journal that is free from the burdens of ‘tribalism’ that dominate the Arab-Islamic intellectual scene. It is meant to counteract the wave of Westernization. Certainly in this context, Westernization is synonymous with secularization and from that follows an implicit reproach of secular intellectuals. *Al-Manar al-jadid*, argues ‘Immara, is an Arab-Islamic forum, an authentic enlightened work that does not wear the masque of enlightenment to trade with culture.

Al-Manar al-jadid is a commemoration for the one hundred years of the old *al-Manar* of Rashid Rida. It is a free intellectual forum that reflects *al-ta‘adudiyya al-fikriyya* (intellectual plurality). This article is followed by a reprint of the opening article of Rashid Rida. Then comes another article by Mohammed ‘Immara on the life and works of Rashid Rida. ‘Immara notes that Rida’s concerns expressed in this reprinted article, although written a hundred years ago, nonetheless express identical problems that continue to be burning issues. *Al-Manar al-jadid* also reprinted an article by Sayyed Qutb published in *al-Risala* in 1946. It bears the title “American Consciousness and the Palestinian Question” (*al-Manar al-jadid*, Vol. 2:118-122)). In this article Qutb condemns the West as materialist and a civilization without

heart or consciousness. By taking this position Qutb supported a cardinal in England who condemned the Charter of the United Nations. In fact, the East-West/spirituality-materialism dichotomy in Qutb's thinking (and similarly the position of others Islamists) is indeed not new and has been pointed out and criticized by secular intellectuals like Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Husayn Ahmed Amin, Mohammed Said al-^cAshmawi and many others.

In relation to the materialist West /spiritual East, the article of Abdel Wahhab al-Messiri stresses the failure of Western materialist secularist philosophy since it denies metaphysics (*al-Manar al-jadid*, Oct. 1998, 4:57-68). Elsewhere I have discussed the implications of al-Messiri's discourse, which is to be associated historically with similar trends at the beginning of the century in the Middle East. Al-Messiri's arguments once pushed to their limits, present a vision of a decadent, immoral, sexually promiscuous West. Ironically, it is exactly the opposite position of Rashid Rida who, not by coincidence, admired the West for "those positive moral values and ethical habits that the Muslim World had lost" (Shahin 1997:66). Rida had praised the Europeans' hard work, love of knowledge and separation between reason and emotion (ibid. 65). As for Rida's relation to materialist philosophies, he was a close friend of Shumayyil and defended him when Shumayyil translated Buchner's *Interpretation of Darwin*. Rida argued that such theories are not in conflict with the Holy Book (ibid. 27-28).

One could interpret Mohammed 'Immara's writings and similarly those of Tariq al-Bishri as endeavors to create a modern Islamic discourse on the same grounds as nationalist ideology. The language bears similarities with that of the theology of liberation. This is not a novel argument. In fact, Sami Zubaida pointed it out when he looked at the shift in the intellectual trajectory of the former Marxist 'Adil Husayn (Zubaida 1988).

These Muslim intellectuals also advocate the necessity for dialogue and for human rights, countering the arguments of the secularists and reversing their views. In the first issue of *al-Manar al-jadid* al-Bishri contributed a brilliant article in which he traces the birth of both the secular-oriented *al-Hilal* journal, which was founded in 1892 by Jurgi Zaydan with five issues already published by 1892 and compares it with *al-Manar* which appeared in 1898, reminding us that both publications are products of the late nineteenth century and that both Rida and Zaydan came from the Levant. He sees these two journals as representing the two major streams of thought in Egyptian

society, Islam and secularism. He notes that *al-Hilal* continued to appear while *al-Manar* ceased publication 1940. *Al-Hilal* celebrated its hundredth anniversary five years ago during the celebrations of One Hundred Years of Enlightenment. He argues that the cessation or continuation of magazines is not to be taken as a sign of failure or success of an intellectual stream. Other journals such as *al-Liwa`* of Mustafa Kamel, and *al-Ahali*, *al-Jihad*, *Kawkab al-sharq*, and other papers disappeared, while *al-Ahram* which was founded by Selim and Niqola Taqla and *al-Akhbar* by Mustafa and Ali Amin (two papers that did not belong to the nationalist movement) continued to appear. Al-Bishri also observes that since the country became exposed to Western influence, Islamic thought has become influential in the cultural sphere, while the nationalist democratic movement has spread in the political realm. However, according to al-Bishri, both relied on popular movements.

I read al-Bishri's comparison of these two journals as an attempt to give equal weight to the Islamic trend and balance it with the secular nationalist stream. He treats them as being on equal grounds since both express nationalist sentiments. By doing so I read this article as a serious attempt to provide a rationalization for the Islamic movement and for re-Islamizing history. For al-Bishri, there are two major political trends: the secular nationalists and the Islamists. But the problem was not simply ideological. The struggle (*sira`*) between the Islamist ideology and imported secularist ideology (*wafida*) has become powerful. *Al-Manar al-jadid* shows that the "Islamic liberals" have started to use language identical to that of the secularists, although with different meanings and with different practical political implications.

One could read this borrowing of terminology, i.e. the borrowing of the language of the theology of liberation as well as dependency jargon, as tactical move in a fight by the Islamists for intellectual recognition. It would seem that what worries the writers of *al-Manar al-jadid* is that they are not being identified as intellectuals and elites (*al-nukhba*) by their opponents, the secularists, although they curse them. In fact, they advocate calling themselves "the Muslim intellectuals" and claim that their intellectualism is as legitimate as that of the secularists.

An article of Mohammed al-Qudusi (Jan. 1998:104-107) is a case in point. It consists of a response to the leftist intellectual and former leader of the student movement of the seventies, Ahmed Abdallah, who divides the

Egyptian public intellectual scene into two sections, the Islamists and the intellectuals. Al-Qudusi protests against Abdallah's classification, since his labelling implies that Islamists could never earn the status of "intellectuals". Al-Qudusi's protest could be translated as the Islamists' resentment of being treated as outcasts by the intellectual elite. Al-Qudusi's tactic for "inclusion" is the "exclusion" of the other camp by proposing a new definition of secular intellectuals. By calling them "Westernized" intellectuals he *inauthenticates* them. The term *'imalah thaqafīyya*, "intellectual collaboration" with the West, has a negative connotation and thus becomes an attack of the secularists.

The fight over inclusion is undertaken with a bitter attack on the secularists in a manner that leaves a lot to be desired concerning tolerance, acceptance of the Other, and dialogue. Essentially Immara wants to provide an *authentic* enlightenment for the Islamists while making the secular version *inauthentic*. It is an inversion of the notion of 'authentic otherness', an idea developed by McCannell, quoted in Robertson (1992:173). The Islamists discredit the secularists on the grounds of their irreligiosity (*illa dini*), indeed as fanatically irreligious (*la dini mutatarifi la diniyyatihi*) (Tammam 1998, 2:140).

It is no coincidence that both camps use the term fanaticism. The Islamic camp expressed a strong resentment for being misrepresented in the recent Cairo book fair. Secular figures like the Marxists Mahmud Amin al-°Alim and Rifa'at al-Said, but also Sayyid Yassin, Director of the al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies, are condemned as "mummies" and relics of irreligious thinking. "Cultural collaboration" has become a key phrase, since the secularists are seen as promoting *al-sharq al-awsatiyya* (a 'Middle Eastern' world view), which is greatly indebted to Taha Husayn and is, according to the Islamists, an ideology that serves American and Israeli interests. Here again *tanwir* is made synonymous to westernization. The Islamic camp wants to show that there is a close relationship between the government and the "irreligious" intellectuals. It is a notion that is not altogether invalid, given the fact that there is a tacit coalition between secular intellectuals and the state. Moreover, it is possible to argue that in recent years, the antagonism between various camps has led to harsh condemnations that created boundaries and definitions that either contaminated the foe or purified the friend. This has become more evident with the possibility of dialogue

between Israel and those from the Arab side who have taken initiatives in that direction. Inclusion/exclusion of the Other is also taking the shape of a fight over who has the final judgement over religious texts, historical figures, and symbols.

Muhammad 'Immara

Muhammad 'Immara, has become known for being the editor of the works of Jamal iddin al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh, the two major Muslim reformers, which were published in Beirut by *al-Muassassa al-'arabiyya lil-dirasat wal-nashr*. He is one of today's most prolific Islamic writers. In the sixties he was known for his leftist leanings in interpreting Islam. With the growing Islamization of former leftist intellectuals 'Immara has become a staunch anti-Marxist.

The case of 'Immara is fascinating. He enjoys a wide audience of readers who are attracted by his populist writings that filter through in the media. He has access to the official press and has made the Islamic heritage accessible to a wide, non-specialist Egyptian and Arab audience. 'Immara's simple Arabic style fills columns in newspapers on Islamic figures and Islamic movements. He enjoys the paradoxical status of being recognized by government circles and yet known for communicating with the Islamic opposition and engaging them in dialogue. He is a popular media figure and his positions are polemical. One could read his texts as mirrors refracting secularist texts. For example, his recent writings are responses to secular intellectuals like the judge Muhammad Said al-Ashmawi and the Cairo university philosopher Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. Another recent book is a response to the French philosopher Roger Garaudy who converted to Islam, where he criticizes Garaudy's definition of fundamentalism (*usuliyya*) and its contemporary forms ('Immara 1998). The main thrust of his attack is Garaudy's inability to rid himself of his former Marxist garb.

This is certainly a paradox as 'Immara is himself a former Marxist who used concepts such as class and revolution extensively, applying them to the progressive thinking in Islamic history of the *Shi'a* and *Mu'tazila*. In his book, *al-Islam wal-thawra* (Islam and Revolution in Early Islam) (1988), 'Immara defines clear class divisions between traders and peasants, the few (*khasha*) versus the masses (*'amma*). Reading Immara, (especially in his late

Islamist phase of the eighties and nineties) one finds his terminology has become a patchwork of nationalist, Marxist, and Islamist jargon combined with a strong denunciation and hatred towards secular and Marxist intellectuals.

Mohammed 'Immara was born in 1931. He studied in a village *Qur'an* school and then at al-Azhar university. Later he earned a doctorate at Dar al-'Ulum, Cairo University. At that time he was known for his leftist tendencies and wrote extensively about the *Mu'tazila* and Islamic philosophy (Steppat 1991:700). He has been an extremely prolific writer producing more than fifty books and many articles. He edited twenty works of famous Muslim thinkers, including the *Fasl al-maqal* (The Decisive Treatise) of Ibn Rushd (Kügelgen 1994:181), also extensive publications on Islamization ('Immara 1991a, 1991b, 1991c). During the last ten years he has been a regular contributor of articles to the liberal-right wing newspaper *al-Wafd* on the "Islamization of Knowledge" as alternative to materialist knowledge.³ There 'Immara borrows arguments similar to those promoted by Christian scientists and by Green parties about the ethical implications of science. 'Immara sees that while the laws of biological inheritance are universal, the political implications of genetics may vary, and he pleads for a spiritual and pure East devoid of Western decadence.

'Immara launched a strong attack against the secularists in a paper given at the IIIT in Cairo, in 1993 ('Immara 1993). In particular, he targeted a project of the government's publishing agency, *al-Hay'a al-'amma lil-kitab*, reprinting old works in a series that was part of its *One Hundred Years of Enlightenment* campaign, sold at inexpensive prices (25 piasters).⁴ The collection includes historical intellectuals such al-Tahtawi, al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Shaykh 'Ali 'Abdei Raziq, Taha Husayin, Sa'ad Zaghlul, Mohammed Husayn Haykal, and Salama Musa. The series was

³ In issues of *al-Wafd* on 17, 19, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 March 1991.

⁴ The government's attempt to launch an enlightenment movement could be interpreted as another facet of the production of religious symbols and language instigated earlier by the government. The uncontrolled effects of the decaying system of education on the national level, the expansion of informal religious institutions, and the wearing the Islamic attire in schools, which was first met with the consent of the government but later, when such phenomena became widespread, was harshly resisted—all these things have shaped the dialectics of enlightenment versus obscurantism between the government and the Islamists.

entitled the *Age of Taha Hussein*. Taha Husayn is regarded in Egypt today as a symbol of the Enlightenment. By undertaking such a project, the government aimed to oppose "obscurantists", that is, the contemporary Islamists. What is happening here is, paradoxically, the government trying to counteract Islamists by appropriating national heroes and Islamic reformers to its secular interpretation of "enlightenment" with 'Immara opposing the government by insisting on an Islamist alternative.

In his paper 'Immara attacked the entire project of popularizing Taha Husayn and other liberal intellectuals.⁵ As a response to the government's attempt to popularize the enlightened intellectuals and Islamic reformers as *tanwiris*, "the enlightened", 'Immara sought to demonstrate that these thinkers are misunderstood. They are not secularists, he claims. Rather, they are critical of Western civilization. 'Immara's stand would seem to be a reaction to the government's attempt to use its authority to impose its notions of culture, in this case a view of Islamic reformers and national heroes as a secular heritage, to counter the threat of the Islamists.

'Immara starts with al-Tahtawi (1801-73). Rifa'a Badawi al-Tahtawi was among the first Azharis to be sent to study in France during the reign of Mohammed Ali. He published his observation and description of his stay in Paris in *Takhlis al-ibriz ila talkhis baris*. According to 'Immara, al-Tahtawi refuted Western philosophy as misleading and viewed the French as atheistic and irreligious.⁶ 'Immara also attacks the late Egyptian "Christian", Louis 'Awad, for believing that Tahtawi translated the Code Napoleon as a precaution against trade and other interactions with foreigners, not in order to be adopted in Egypt. It is important to note here that Louis 'Awad was a great admirer of al-Tahtawi as representing one of the first reformers of modern Egyptian thought because of his openness to European ideas. 'Awad saw him as the founder of the modern Egyptian press. 'Awad advocated a

⁵ Immara is by no means alone in attacking secular liberals for copying everything from the West, the negative as well as the positive. For example, al-Messiri (1995:27) labels Ahmed Lutfi el Sayyed, Shibli Shumail, and Salama Musa 'Westernized extremists', while Marxists and socialists are considered equally westernized because they accept Western patterns of knowledge.

⁶ Aziz al-Azmeh argues exactly the contrary to Immara in that the early reformists like al-Tahtawi recognized their borrowings from Western liberal thought. Al-Tahtawi read Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu and Condillac extensively (al-Azmeh 1994).

secular worldview and pleaded for a national state. It is unfair to label him as promoting a Coptic worldview. For ʿAwad, the Coptic and Pharaonic elements in Egypt constituted parts of the Egyptian identity.

In order to counteract ʿAwad, ʿImmara seeks to give al-Tahtawi a religious coloration by arguing that in later periods of his life al-Tahtawi increasingly mentioned the Islamic *shariʿa*. He also argues that al-Afghani's reformist movement should not be considered one of the *tanwiris* (since in the nineties ʿImmara considers such a label to be negative). However, it should be noted that in earlier writings on Tahtawi ʿImmara used the term *tanwir* in a positive, progressive fashion. At earlier times also, like ʿAziz al-ʿAzmeḥ, ʿImmara made mention of al-Tahtawi's borrowings from Western enlightenment.

ʿImmara points to the fact that Shaykh ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq retreated from reprinting his book, *Islam and the Principle of Authority* in a second edition. In this book ʿAbd al-Raziq argued that "the Caliphate was neither a basic principle nor a necessary institution." His book was strongly attacked by al-Azhar and cost him the loss of the status of ʿ*alim* (see Vatikiotis 1976:301). According to ʿImmara's interpretation in the nineties, by the end of his life the Shaykh did not have anything to do with his book, that it had been Taha Husayn who had influenced him negatively, a contention much disputed. The comparison between ʿImmara's earlier comments (ʿImmara, ed. 1972) on ʿAbd al-Raziq's book and his later writings is fascinating. In his 1972 edited edition of *Islam and the Principle of Authority* ʿImmara's research into the context and the events around the scandal that this book produced is rich and detailed. In an analysis of ʿImmara's 1972 commentary Leonard Binder writes of ʿImmara's reading of ʿAbd al-Raziq being in general positive, in spite of his major criticism of it as a confused and contradictory work (Binder 1988:148).

ʿImmara's earlier comments claim that the book was first of all crucial as a political tract against British colonial powers, and second, that it demonstrated the misuse of the Caliphate for purely political ends. ʿImmara's work in the seventies was an attempt to rescue ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq by offering an "objective" study (*al-taqyīm al-mawḍuʿī*) of *Islam and the Principle of Authority* (ʿImmara 1972:6). Abdou Filali-Ansary who recently edited a French edition of the work of ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq shows, I believe quite accurately, that ʿImmara's later interpretations are inventions and a way

of self justification of his own retreat from secularism to the Islamist camp. In his 1993 paper, 'Immara begins his exposition of 'Abdel Raziq by stating that 'Abdel Raziq was inspired by Satan and reproduces all the arguments of 'Abd al-Raziq adversaries ('Abd al-Raziq 1992:29). But 'Immara chooses to ignore the total silence to which the *Shaykh* was reduced.

'Immara directs strong attacks against Taha Husayn, who he regards as the Imam of the Westernizers and imitators of the West (*al-imam al-mughtaribin wa muqalidin al-gharb*) ('Immara 1993:20). Taha Husayn has been the subject of many attacks from the Islamists and from some advocates of Islamization. According to 'Immara, the danger that Taha Husayn's ideas represent for culture was his argument that the Oriental mind is Greek.⁷ Nevertheless, 'Immara insists that Taha Husayn respected religion and advocated that the state should respect religion. He offers as example that in 1959, when Taha Husayn was part of the committee writing the constitution of Egypt, he argued that faith should include the entire holy book instead of just parts of the *Qur'an*. With this remark, 'Immara would seem ultimately to want to rescue Taha Husayn from complete culpability ('Immara 1993:22).

Muhammad 'Immara and Tariq al-Bishri

The tone of 'Immara's recent writings reveals violent reactions to the ideas of the secularists and the impossibility reconciling with them. In *suqut al-ghuluw al-cilmani*, (The Fall of the Secularist Exaggeration) ('Immara 1995), he dedicates the entire book to a virulent attack against the judge Muhammad Sa'id al-'Ashamawi (whose life is under threat from the Islamists). The title in itself implies a strong grudge against secularism. 'Immara's diatribe aims to discredit the patriotism of al-'Ashamawi, accusing him of collaborating with Christian, Western, and secular institutions. 'Immara discredits al-'Ashamawi by arguing that his writings are appreciated by Israeli circles in Cairo. He attacks al-'Ashamawi's interpretation, raising questions concerning the collection of the *Qur'an*

⁷ Concerning this point see Hourani's analysis of the thinkers of the Liberal age (1983:330). Hourani argued that for Taha Hussein, it was the spiritual geography and not the physical one that was important. Egypt belonged to Western civilization rather than to India.

during ʿUthman (the third Calif) and the unification of the reading of the *Qur'an*, a point raised by al-ʿAshmawi in common with Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd and earlier, Taha Husayn. The attacks proceed to al-ʿAshmawi's historical interpretations of *hadith*, *fiqh* and other branches of Islamic studies. They crudely discredit al-ʿAshmawi's ideas and simplify them. Thus al-ʿAshmawi is presented as having argued "that the *Qur'an* contains mistakes," and that Abu Bakr (the first Calif) violated the rights of the Prophet. In another publication, al-ʿAshmawi is defined as belonging to *talamith al-tanwir al-gharbi al-ʿilmani* (the students of the Western secular enlightenment) (ʿImmara 1995:216). While such statements may appear journalistic and inconsequential they are actually dangerous and seek to incite populist anger.

If the attack against secular intellectuals begins with Salama Musa and Taha Husayn it extends to the contemporary writings of Ambassador Husayn Ahmed Amin (ʿImmara 1995:211). The attack on Taha Husayn and Salama Musa can also be traced in the writings of Sayyid Qutb, martyr and leader of the Muslim Brothers. It has become a standard argument among Islamists (see Abu Zayd 1992:48). Even the Sorbonne-trained Egyptian philosopher Hassan Hanafi is not spared such criticism (ʿImmara 1995:188-197). ʿImmara's recent anti-Marxist stand is most evident in *al-Tafsir al-markisi lil-Islam* (The Marxist Interpretation of Islam) (ʿImmara 1996). He wrote this book as a reply to the Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd scandal. Although ʿImmara clearly states that he is against applying the law of apostasy as well as being against divorcing a husband from his wife against their will, the entire book is dedicated to a harsh critique of Abu Zayd's writings. ʿImmara realizes that the Abu Zayd scandal could harm the Islamic movement. Yet, while rescuing him from trial, divorce and death threats, ʿImmara seems to undertake a more subtle attack of Abu Zayd for his "materialist Marxist interpretation of Islam."

ʿImmara does not deny that he was himself formerly a student of Marxism and practised it, but he argues that it is a materialistic philosophy that denies the existence of God (ʿImmara 1996:34). It seems then that ʿImmara rejects Abu Zayd's analysis of religious text according to a materialistic socio-economic interpretation. Ironically, this is precisely what ʿImmara himself undertook some twenty years ago. While avoiding the witch-hunting attitude which the opponents of Abu Zayd carried on,

nevertheless the arguments of ʿImmara are similar to those of his opponents. ʿImmara indicates that Abu Zayd's academic standards are unacceptable and that his works are full of mistakes. The book contains a chapter titled *qilla fil ʿilm* which could be translated as ignorance or lack in science, to define Abu Zayd's academic standards. He stresses that Abu Zayd lacked good intention and understanding (*suʿal-fahm wal-niyya*). The language ʿImmara uses to characterize Abu Zayd's works denotes in the end a deeply vengeful frame of mind.

To put Tareq al-Bashri in the same basket with ʿImmara is problematic. Those who know al-Bishri personally acknowledge him to have great sensitivity. He is skillful in public meetings and has an extremely refined way of listening to and accepting the opposing Other. He is not a historian by training, but a jurist. However, his studies on the nationalist movement, his numerous articles in the Egyptian journal, *al-Katib*, and his voluminous work on the Copts and Muslims and national unity (al-Bishri 1982) warranted him the reputation of being a solid and serious scholar. Those who have approached him are immediately attracted by his modesty and appealing personality. One is nevertheless, confronted with the dilemma that his recent writings, and in particular after his shift towards Islam as an ideology, may not be without prejudice in discussing the Other. This is where perhaps al-Bishri may share some political positions with ʿImmara. In his recent book *al-Hiwar al-islami al-ʿilmani* on the secular-Islamist dialogue (1996), al-Bishri uses the terms *muhakat* or *taqlid* (imitation) of the West to denote a key problem in the interaction between the East and the West. Although the book starts by promising to present the basis for dialogue between secularists and Islamists he actually seems to believe that they are in fact not engaged in dialogue but rather in the self-perpetuation of repeated arguments.

Al-Bishri reverses the arguments of the secularists, challenging the idea that secularism appeared historically with the beginning of the *nahda* and reformist measures at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Muhammad Ali Pasha undertook many reforms in the economy, the educational system, and the infrastructure of the state. However the modern institutions that were built during his era, were shut down after his death. The students who were sent to Europe had been oriented towards technical sciences. Very few studied humanities. The few institutions that survived served the politics of dependency towards the West. However, where he disagrees with the

secularists is his point that Muhammad Ali's reformism was part and parcel of belonging to the realm of the Ottoman empire. Al-Bishri reminds us that Muhammad Ali fought several wars under the orders of the Sublime Porte. When he later rebelled, it was still within the internal realm of the Ottoman empire. Moreover, duality in the system of education appeared much later than the time of Muhammad Ali. Reformism was linked to subverting the Islamic *shari'a* as a frame of reference for laws and the notion of political belonging to the Islamic community. Muhammad Ali lived and died as an Ottoman Muslim, and the culture of his time was predominantly Arabic-Islamic (al-Bishri 1996: 9-11). By so arguing, al-Bishri wants to reconstitute and emphasise the *islamicity* of the Ottoman realm and the persistence of the Islamic element with its modernization.

He concludes that the dialogue with some secular intellectuals is useless because they have become a Westernised stratum (*al-fi'a allati tagharabat*) and they have retreated from the roots of their nation (*ibt'adat 'an juthur umatiha*). The alienation of the secular intellectuals is comparable with that of colonial settlers in Africa and the French colons of Algeria. He sees them as a colonising, elite community (al-Bishri 1996:55). They mainly function within the American-European frames of reference. Here again alienation, in contradistinction to the Islamists claim of being "authentic", is used as a tactic to discredit the opponent. Al-Bishri hardly transcended any of the dilemmas he pointed to regarding the possibility of dialogue. However, the authenticity discourse reminds us of the relationship of German intellectuals with French culture. There are in fact analogies to be drawn with the German romantic movement, which found an audience in a moral and economic crisis at the end of the eighteenth century. The move from a cosmopolitan, French-oriented culture to a nationalist one, went together with the romantic movement, which returned to the values of an idealist, Germanic Reich and mystical culture. German nationalism provided arguments about the pure uncontaminated language; they were the real people of God because they were not contaminated by external influences. The discourse of authenticity and imported values between Germany and France prevailed because of the French Revolution (see Droz 1991).

Immara and Ibn Rushd (Averroes)

In recent years, the ideas of Ibn Rushd, philosopher and jurisconsult, born in Cordoba at the end of the twelfth century, have become another battlefield where contemporary secularism and rationalism is fought.⁸ Known to the West as Averroes, the commentator of Aristotle, he has been another target of attacks from fundamentalists who, by insulting him, attempt to undermine rationalist philosophy. For example, he has been described as *mutafalsif* (minute philosopher) and with a similar construction, *mutazindiq* (mediocre heretic) (Urvoy 1991:36).

Perhaps it was because Ibn Rushd was subject to political mistreatment and exile in a small town where the majority of the inhabitants were Jews, and perhaps also because he had more followers in the West as the Latin Averroes than in the world of Islam, that today such facts take a political dimension in the discourse of Islamization. Scholars point to the fact that Ibn Rushd had a different reception and interpretation among the Jews than in the Muslim milieu (Urvoy 1991:36). It is perhaps this ambiguity that makes the location of this philosopher so crucial for the Islamizers.

When Renan wrote his work on Ibn Rushd in 1861, it was based upon Latin and Hebrew translations. Perhaps it was because Renan interpreted Ibn Rushd as a "free thinker" that the contemporary Islamists feel they should reverse Renan's arguments (ibid. 1). Also, Renan had a racist vision of Islam, claiming that it hindered progress in the Orient, and that it did not deserve the same importance as Greece, Ancient India, or Judea. The fact that al-Afghani rejected his ideas complicates matters and can explain Seyyed Hossein Nasr's refutation of Ibn Rushd as a free thinker.

An exegesis of Ibn Rushd is not attempted here.⁹ Rather I would here like to explore his appropriation by different ideological positions. Since Ibn Rushd has become the battlefield where the Islamists are fighting the secularists it is no coincidence that Egyptian film director Youssef Shahin

⁸ Abu l-Walid Muhammad B. Ahmad B. Muhammad B. Rushd, al-Hafid (the grandson), famous in the Medieval West under the name of Averroes was a scholar of Kur'anic sciences and the natural sciences (physics, medicine, biology, astronomy), theologian and philosopher. Averroes was born at Cordova in 520/1198 (*EI* 1960:909).

⁹ For an excellent work on the modern reception of Ibn Rushd in the Arab world see von Kügelgen (1994).

had his recent film on the life and struggles of Ibn Rushd banned by al-Azhar. Mohammed 'Immara's relationship to Ibn Rushd is another good example of changing interpretations according to the *Zeitgeist*, spirit of the times. In her analysis of Mohammed 'Immara interpretation of Averroes and the differing political orientations from the sixties to the eighties, von Kügelgen writes that 'Immara belonged to a group of "rationalist *salafis*" in the late sixties (1994:83). At that time, Averroes was for 'Immara a medium to renew Arabic thought (ibid. 190).

Two articles by Mohammed 'Immara on Averroes are illustrative of his changing positions over time. One was published in the Marxist oriented Egyptian *al-Tali'a* ('Immara 1968:135-145) in 1968 and the other in the journal *Islammiyat al-ma'rifa* (Islamization of Knowledge) ('Immara 1995d). In these articles there is a shift, if not a *volte-face*¹⁰ of some arguments, which obviously have to do with the life cycle of an intellectual biography. In his *al-Tali'a* article 'Immara read Islamic history in terms of forces of progress versus forces of conservatism, an idea that was popular in the sixties among Marxist and Arab nationalist intellectuals.¹¹ There also he emphasized the significance of rationalism in Islam, a point which appears constantly in his late writings. Averroes is interpreted as a prominent example of authentic rational thinking in Islamic civilization (*al-fikr al-'aqli*) and his work as an attempt to combine Greek philosophy with religion ('Immara 1968:137). Wisdom is amalgamated with *shari'a*, (the canonical law of Islam, from *shar'* meaning the revelation, a term he seems to have used differently in the late sixties from the eighties and nineties). *Shari'a* is elaborated in 'Immara's later writings but given a greater meaning and emphasis. For 'Immara, philosophers like Ibn Rushd played a paramount role in pushing the "wheel of development" (a slogan of the Nasser era) (Ibid.143) and combined the relationship between thought or theory (*al-fikr*) with praxis (*'amal*) (ibid. 145). In the 1960s 'Immara saw that "Ibn Rushd had a clear and decisive position in the struggle [against the reactionary

¹⁰ The finest initial critique of Immara's astounding switch and rejection of his previous apparent secular political stand is well elaborated in Tarabishi 1989: 24-49.

¹¹ The materialist interpretation of Islamic history and the terminology of the struggle between forces of the left and right has been developed by the Egyptian historian Ahmad Abbas Saleh in various articles he wrote in the sixties in *al-Katib*.

church in Europe and the Inquisition]... for he stood on the side of the secular, rational Arabic civilization against the clergy and backwardness" (Immara 1968:147).

It is precisely the secularism of Ibn Rushd so strongly praised in the sixties that Immara condemns in the nineties. In 1995 Immara launched a strong attack against the Marxist interpretation of Islam condemning the works of al-Tayyib Tizini, Husayn Muruwa, and Mahmud Isma'il's sociological studies on the revolutionary aspects of Islam as raw and negative attempts to "Marxise" Islam (Immara 1995c:198-204) and all thinking that "molds religion in atheistic forms and buries the spirit in the tomb of matter" (ibid. 199).

Secularism is thus superseded in the nineties by the divine and by Ibn Rushd's religiosity. The misreading and misinterpretation of Ibn Rushd by the Arab secularists is the major line of argumentation developed in Immara's latest article. Ibn Rushd thus becomes another medium to attack the early secularists. Immara's grudge against the secular thinkers who read Ibn Rushd extends to condemning them as agents of imported ideas and imperialist powers (Immara 1995b). He sees that there is a bad intention (*su' al-than*) in the modern reading of Ibn Rushd (Immara 1995d:81). He uses *al-hawa* (emotions, moods) to describe the way Averroes was interpreted by the secularists (ibid. 81). He blames them for their limited perspective. Scholars overstated his importance in reading him as an interpreter of Aristotle, conferring upon him an intermediate role between Islamic and Greek philosophy. Others exaggerated the Greek aspect of Ibn Rushd and the rationalist aspect, *aqalaniyya*, versus *naql* (copying or transmission) (ibid. 82). Immara emphasizes again the notion of *aqal* (intellect) in Averroes, as intrinsic Islamic wisdom, urged by *shar'* (Revelation) and he reverses the argument of the Latin scholars of Averroes whom he sees as having understressed divine grace (*al-'inaya al-ilahiyya*) in human actions. Immara reads Ibn Rushd as opposing materialism and positivism (ibid. 92). For him, the rationalist wisdom of Ibn Rushd cannot be divorced from the *shari'a* (divine law). He argues that Ibn Rushd's idea of the 'intelligence of instinct' was misread at the expense of the *shari'a* (ibid. 83). In the articles of the nineties it is piety that is thus stressed. Ibn Rushd was viewed as a pious man who combined faith with reason. One can trace a similar position in the writings of Seyyed Hossein Nasr whose image of Ibn Rushd as a 'free

thinker' was basically an image of him as an Occidental. Ibn Rushd was a pious man who combined faith with reason, especially in *Fasl al-maqal* (The Decisive Treatise) (see Nasr 1995:330).

We are told that the Christian Lebanese Farah Antun (1874-1922) when he published an essay on Averroes's philosophy in 1903 in Cairo was among the first Arabs to restore him and to tackle the question of separating science from religion. This led to a controversy between Antoun and Mohammed 'Abduh (see Hourani 1983:143-144). 'Immara challenges Farah Antoun as a secularist and materialist who misread Ibn Rushd and interpreted his philosophy as grounded in materialist science ('Immara 1995d:83). He attacks Farah Antun, as the first Maronite Arab intellectual "to transmit this false idea under the colonial authorities," replacing the "complete, comprehensive Islamic model" with a positivist, secularist one (ibid. 85).

'Immara attacks the Egyptian philosopher Murad Wahba as a Marxist and a Copt and subjects him to critique for his secular and rationalist reading of Ibn Rushd, claiming that he subdues religion to reasoning (ibid. 84). According to 'Immara, the followers of Farah Antun today are "performing a Cæsarian operation" on Ibn Rushd. They disguise themselves as they try to create an epistemological break with Islam.

Murad Wahba for his part points to the most recent publication by the Egyptian Government Printing Organization (*al-Ha'ya al-'ammah lil-kitab*) of the work of Antun on Averroes. This government publication was meant to counterbalance the waves of terrorism and extremism. Wahba points out that Antun's original introduction was left out in the new edition and comments critically that it was omitted due to the fact that Antun preached the disunion between state and religion. The dialogue between 'Abduh and Antun was also omitted (Wahba 1994:159). Thus we find the current enlightenment-from-above government policy matching the tactics of reversing arguments and using means identical to their opponents.

Conclusion

This essay attempted to highlight the paradoxes that result from the fight about the right to pronounce the final verdict in the Islamist-secular confrontation, a struggle for inclusion through excluding the Other. It is a fight over legitimacy involving religious texts and symbols. As a contest

over who may state the final sacral commandment about authenticity of discourses it reveals the impossibility of any dialogue.

In this essay I was mainly concerned with the ambiguity pertaining to the discourse of *tanwir*. The state co-optation of secular intellectuals does not spare them from ending up being scapegoats in the game of the Islamist-state confrontation while the intellectuals' tactical stand with the government to counteract a growing Islamic populism that threatens intellectual freedom is equally problematic. The appropriation of the language to counteract both official institutional and underground Islamists, as well as the Islamization from the bottom, puts secular intellectuals in an awkward position. It creates a paradox over a state-imposed discourse about rationalism and enlightenment and produces ambiguity when they take up a so-called progressive posture. Damage had already begun through the support of Islamization from the top, by the government, as a counter measure to Islamization from the bottom which was launched during the time of Sadat. 'Al-'Ashamawi whose works are now banned, was a judge in the service of the Egyptian state. The late Farag Foda who became a victim of secularism through his assassination, was closely related to government circles. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a well established sociologist, who attempted to rehabilitate and reform some Islamists, encourages collaboration with official channels. Certainly al-Qimni's view, similar to that of Sadeq al-'Azm and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd of the dominant culture as religious charlatantry, aided by a pervasive mass-media machinery, is a warning to be taken seriously. The dangers of telepreaching in a domineering, witch-hunting culture, is more than ever at the forefront of factors affecting democracy. One could only agree with al-Qimni about the dominance of "religio-charlatanistic thought" which has been diffused on all levels. Al-Qimni (1996), like Abu Zayd, Fu'ad Zaqqariyya, and Husayn Amin have all sarcastically pointed to the overwhelming culture of *jinns* (the "bold snakes") and '*afrits*' (little devils) that has spread in recent years.

The issue of censorship of books has gained prevalence since Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd was declared an apostate. The banning of the works of Judge Said al-Ashamawi and al-Qimni followed. Abdallah Kamal's *al-Tahlil al-nafsi lil anbiya'* (Psychological analysis of the prophets) was censored in 1996 and the book removed from the bookstores. Maxime Rodinson's biography of the Prophet Muhammad stirred a tempest as book insulting to

the Prophet. Alifa Rifa'at's *Distant View of a Minaret*, was removed from the syllabus of AUC and Ahdaf Soueif's novel *In the Eye of the Sun* was removed from the bookshops. Mohammed Shoukri *al-Khubs al-hafi* (the naked bread) was considered pornographic by some AUC students and discussed as such in official circles. Subsequently the government banned it.

These events are signs that Egypt is witnessing a further suppression of intellectual freedom and restrictions on what is and is not morally permissible. On the other side of the spectrum, there has been a vicious circle of mounting violence, a kind of vendetta type between a corrupt state apparatus, an exceedingly rich new class entirely unconcerned about social questions and growing class problems, and the opposition exemplified in the Islamists. The government still applies the death penalty on Islamists. For instance, in April 1999, nine death sentences, 68 prison terms, and 30 acquittals were decreed (*Cairo Times* 29 April-12 May, 1999). Statistics of the Ibn Khaldun Report (1998:380-385) reveal an increase in the number of death incidents in 1997 (both police forces and terrorists) in comparison to the previous year. At the same time, intellectuals like Adil Husayn who faced a court case for insulting the Minister of Interior have not been spared from jail.

Can one still speak of inclusion and dialogue? The weakness of this essay is that it was mainly concerned with discourses and fights of symbolic capital over a transcendental good, i.e. intellectual hegemony, while social reality is determined by the concrete measures of the state. The state in its turn seems to be trapped in a reactive logic of blind and random acts which, while seeking to contain violence, also generates it.

References

- Abdel Malek, Anouar. 1999. "Ayna huquq al-umam" (Where are the rights of nations), *al-Ahram*, 23 February.
- Abu Zayd, Nasr Hamid. 1992. *Al-Khitab al-dini: Ru'yah naqdiyya* (The religious discourse, a critical perspective). Beirut: Dar al-Muntakhab al-Arabi.
- Armbrust, Walter. 1996. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ayubi, Nazih. 1997. *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*. London: Ithaca Press.
- Al-^oAzm, Sadiq J. 1998. *Al-Tanwir, al-ilmaniyya wal-salafiyya: Hiwar bila difaf* (Enlightenment, Secularism and Islamic reform: Dialogue without boundaries). Amman: al-Mu'assassa al-^oarabiyya lil-dirasat wal-nashr.
- Al-^oAzmeh, Aziz. 1994. "Modernist Muslim Reformism and the Text." Paper presented at a conference on Islam and the Challenge of Modernity, Historical and Contemporary Contexts, The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization. ISTAC: Kuala Lumpur, 1-5 August.
- Bhabha, Homi. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Binder, Leonard. 1988. *Islamic Liberalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Al-Bishri, Tariq. 1996. *Al-Hiwar al-islami al-^oalmani* (Muslim secular dialogue).
- _____. 1998. "Al-Tajdid al-islami bayn qarn mada wa qarn yaji" (Islamic renewal between the past century and the coming one), *al-Manar al-Jadid* 1.
- Droz, Jacques. 1991. *Histoire de l'Allemagne* (History of Germany). Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

- EI (Encyclopedia of Islam). 1960. "Ibn Rushd", pp. 909-920.
- Enan, Laila, 1998. *Al-Hamala al-frinsiyya: tanwir am tazwir* (The French expedition: Enlightenment or falsification). Cairo: Dar al-Hilal.
- Entelis, John. 1997. *Islam, Democracy and the State in North Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Filali-Ansary, Abdou, trans. 1992. *L'Islam et les fondements du pouvoir* (Islam and the Foundations of Power) of Ali Abd al-Raziq. Paris: Edition de la Decouverte/CEDEJ.
- Hanafi, Hasan. 1990. "Al-Arab wal-thawra al-frinsiyya" (The Arabs and the French revolution) in *Hiwar al-Mashreq wal-Maghreb*. Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli.
- Hourani, Albert H. 1983 (1962). *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*. Oxford University Press. Second edition, 1983, Cambridge University Press.
- Ibn Khaldun Center (Cairo). 1998. *Al-mujtama' al-madani wal-tahawul al-dimuqrati: al-taqrir al-sanawi* (Civil society and democratic transformation in the Arab world: Annual report).
- Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. 1998. "Min al-Tantawi illa al-Tahtawi" (From Tantawi to Tahtawi), *al-Tanwir*, 4 July.
- 'Immara, Muhammad. 1968. "al-Falsafa al-'aqliyya: Ibn Rushd wal-falsafa al-'aqliyya fi al-islam" (Ibn Rushd and the Rationalist Philosophy in Islam), *al-Tali'a*, November, pp. 135-153.
- _____, ed.. 1972. *Al-Islam wa usul al-hukm* (Islam and the principles of authority of Ali Abd al-Raziq). Beirut: al-Mu'assassa al-'Arabiyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr.
- _____. 1973. "Al-mauqif min al-turath al-'aqli li Ibn Rushd" (On the rationalist heritage of Ibn Rushd), *al-Katib*, August, pp. 80-100.
- _____. 1984. *Rifa' al-Tahtawi: Ra'id al-tanwir fil 'asr al-hadith* (Rifa' al-Tahtawi: Pioneer of enlightenment in contemporary times). Cairo: Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi.

- _____. 1988. *Al-Islam wal-thawra* (Islam and Revolution). Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq. Third Edition.
- _____. 1991a. *Islamic Methodology*. Herdon: The International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- _____. 1991b. *Ma'alim fi al-tariq* (Signposts of the Islamic Methodology). Al-Azhar al-Sharif jointly with the International Institute of Islamic Thought. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- _____. 1991c. *Aslamat al-ma'rafa* (The Islamization of Knowledge). Cairo: Dar al-Sharq al-Awsat.
- _____. 1993. *Fikr al-tanwir bayn al-islamiyin wal-^cilmaniyyin* (Enlightenment thought between the Islamists and the secularists). Cairo: IIIT.
- _____. 1995a. *Suqut al-ghuluw al-^cilmani* (The fall of secularist exaggeration). Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- _____. 1995b. *Al-Islam bayn al-tanwir wal-tazwir* (Islam between Enlightenment and Falsification). Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- _____. 1995c. *Al-Mawqi^c al-fikri li Ibn Rushd fil-gharb wal-Islam* (The intellectual status of Averroes in the west and the Muslim world). Islammiyat al-ma'rafa (an IIIT publication).
- _____. 1996. *Al-Tafsir al-markisi lil-Islam* (The Marxist interpretation of Islam). Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- _____. 1998. *Al-Usuliyya bayn al-gharb wal-Islam* (Fundamentalism between the West and Islam). Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- Al-Jabri, Mohamed ^cAbid. 1990. *Hasan Hanafi wa Mohamed ^cAbid al-Jabri: hiwar al-mashreq wal-maghreb* (Hasan Hanafi and Mohamed ^cAbid al-Jabri: A dialogue between East and West). Cairo: Maktabet Madbuli.
- Labib, Hani. "Al-Fikr al-arabi wal-tanwir" (Arabic thought and enlightenment). In *Al-mujtama^c al-madani wal-tahawul al-dimuqrati: al-taqrir al-sanawi* (Civil society and democratic transformation in the Arab world: Annual report). Cairo: Ibn Khaldun Center, 1998.

- Al-Messiri, Abdel Wahhab. 1998. "Fashal al-tafsir al-markisi li zahirat al-insan" (Failure of the Marxist interpretation of mankind), *al-Manar al-Jadid* 4 (October).
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1995. "Philosophy." In *Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World.*, edited by John Esposito.
- Al-Qudusi, Muhammad. 1998. "'Umma bayn thaqafatayn wa jumhur yabhath 'an gama'at" (A nation between two cultures, and an audience in search of a community), *al-Manar al-Jadid* 1 (January):104-107.
- Robertson, Roland. 1992. *Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage Publications.
- Steppat, Fritz. 1991. "Sakularisten und Islamisten: ein Kategorisierungsversuch in Agypten." (Secularists and Islamists: An attempt at categorization in Egypt), *Asien, Afrika, Lateinamerika*. Band 19, Heft 4.
- Shafiq, Sulaiman. 1998. "The French Expedition, Pros and Cons", *al-Tanwir* 4(15).
- Shahin. Emad Eldin. 1993. *Through Muslim Eyes: M. Rashid Rida and the West*. Herndon, Virginia: The International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- Tammam, Hussam. 1998. "Ma'rad al-Qahira al-dawli al-thalathun lil-kitab" (The thirtieth Cairo international book fair), *al-Manar al-Jadid* 2.
- Tarabishi, George. 1989. *Mathbahat al-turath fil-thaqafa al-'arabiyaa al-mu'asira* (The slaughter of heritage in contemporary Arab culture). London: Dar al-Saqi.
- Urvoy, Dominique. 1991. *Ibn Rushd (Averroes)*. London: Routledge.
- Vatikiotis, P.J. 1976. *The Modern History of Egypt*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Von Kügelgen, Anke. 1994. *Averroes und die arabische Moderne: Ansätze zu einer Neubegründung des Rationalismus im Islam* (Averroes and the

contemporary Arab: Beginnings of a founding of rationalism in Islam).
Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Wahba, Murad. 1994. *Madkhal ila al-tanwir* (Introduction to enlightenment). Cairo: Dar al-^oAlam al-Thalith.

Yahya, Muhammad. 1998 "Al-haraqat al-^oalamiyya li huquq al-insan" (The international human rights movement: An attempt to draw a landscape), *al-Manar al-Jadid* 1 (January).

Zubaida, Sami. 1988. "Islam, Cultural Nationalism, and the Left", *Review of Middle East Studies* 4:1-33.