

Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri and Arabic Reason: An Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT: The history of the presentation of new trends in rationalism by Muslim thinkers dates back over 100 years and it is aimed at restoring capabilities necessary to compensate backwardness and past failures on the one hand and progress and creativity in scientific, cultural, technological, social and other fields, on the other. One such theoretician is Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri, the Moroccan thinker who, if not the most eminent, is certainly one of the most eminent. Since in such trends, some aspects of reason and rationalism are given greater preponderance than in the past, and also are considered to be instruments to solve contemporary crises and necessary for progress, such issues should be studied and analysed in the field of Islamic studies. In the present paper, al-Jabiri’s views concerning the backwardness of Arab societies is studied and criticised.

KEYWORDS: reason, critique of Arabic Reason, constructed reason, constructive reason, al-Jabiri.

Introduction

When the Islamic world in general and the Arab world in particular became closely acquainted with the advances of the West,¹ Muslims felt that they suffered, relative to the West, serious and fundamental backwardness in science and technology; thus, an essential question and concern posed itself to them: “What has caused our

backwardness and the extraordinary and fast advances of the West?” What are those factors which are causing the West, which was always using the scientific, experimental, and cultural achievements of the Muslim scientists and was in debt to them, to be far ahead of Islamic society? This question led them to other questions: to what extent have culture and tradition played their roles in this crisis? What should be done to solve this crisis? Can we expect to find a way out of this crisis through establishing a new relationship between tradition and cultural heritage on the one hand and modernity on the other?

These questions and the like became distinguished when westerners came to Islamic countries to exploit them, and the two cultures – western and eastern – confronted each other. From that time and until the present, Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers, learned ones, and intellectuals have tried to answer these questions from various viewpoints and using different approaches. Various schemes covering extensive spectra were devised; including Arab tribalism and sometimes Socialist, Communist, Salafi and other approaches. Gradually, these projects faced problems and objections, and their defects appeared; then, other schemes were introduced. This continued until the 1960s; thereafter, schemes such as those of Hasan Hanafi and Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri were devised.²

Some of the devisers of such schemes think that the West has advanced since she has denied all her scientific, cultural, and academic past in various fields, and propose the Islamic societies to go in the same path. They believe that to attain a proper place in the contemporary era, [Muslim societies] should stay far away from their cultural and scientific past and heritage of their fathers, and think, and live by western cultural, scientific, and moral standards.

Of course, there are others who think completely differently, accept past culture, tradition, and heritage in their entirety as an unchangeable principle, and ignore past or present changes and developments. Not only do they fail to provide a solution for this problem, but furthermore they do not even believe that there is a problem. They think that the problems, if any, are caused by distance from cultural, traditional purity and that the Islamic societies have been influenced by the West.

Some others have taken the middle road, and believe that, between tradition and modernity, complete acceptance or rejection is impossible; however a new selection and organisation should be made on the basis of concrete principles and frameworks in which fixed and variable principles should draw on suitable and useful elements from both tradition and modernity. This third approach does, of course, cover a broad spectrum and includes various viewpoints.

In this regard, there are eminent scholars among contemporary Muslim thinkers and Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri without any doubt is one of the most eminent ones. Due to his extensive and wide-ranging knowledge along with his familiarity with the new view, he has tried to provide a new pattern for Arabic-Islamic rationalism so that the Arabic-Islamic world may, through cultural, social and scientific creativity, compensate for past backwardness and failures, and attain a proper status.

Al-Jabiri in a Snapshot

Al-Jabiri (1935-2010) was born in Fikik in the East Marrakesh. In the early 1950s he was one of the activists struggling against French colonialism and one of the leaders and thinkers of *al-Ittihad al-Ishtiraki li al-Quwa al-Sha'biyyah* (Socialist Union of Popular Forces) Party which had socialist and communist tendencies. For a short while in 1963, he was imprisoned along with some of the Party's leaders. When the Party came to power, and was able to become a minister of State, he refused. In 1981, to concentrate on research and scientific issues, he withdrew from the Party and political activities. He went to study philosophy, and in 1967, he obtained a postgraduate degree. In 1970, he obtained his doctorate from the Faculty of Humanities in Muhammad V University. His dissertation was entitled *Al-'Asabiyyah wa al-Dawlah ... Ma'alim al-Nazariyyah al-Khalduniyyah fi al-Tarikh al-'Arabi al-Islami*. He taught philosophy at the same Faculty. He passed away this year.³

Works: *Al-'Asabiyya wa al-Dawlah ... Ma'alim al-Nazariyyah al-Khalduniyyah fi al-Tarikh al-'Arabi al-Islami; Adwa 'ala Mushkil al-Ta'lim bi al-Maghrib;*

Madkhal ila Falsafat al-'Ulum (two volumes); *Min Ajl Ru'yah Taqaddumiyyah li Ba'd Mushkilatina al-Fikriyyah wa al-Tarbawiyyah*; *Nahnu wa al-Turath: Qira'a Mu'asirah fi Turathina al-Falsafi*;⁴ *al-Khitab al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir: Dirasah Tabliliyyah Naqdiyyah*; *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabi*; *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*; *al-Siyasah al-Ta'limiyyah fi al-Maghrib al-'Arabi*; *Ishkaliyyat al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir*; *Al-Maghrib al-Mu'asir: Al-Khususiyah wa al-Huwiyyah, Al-Hidathah wa al-Tanmiyah*; *Al-'Aql al-Siyasi al-'Arabi*; *Hiwar al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib, Dialogue with Hasan Hanafi*; *Al-Turath wa al-Hadathah: Dirasah wa Munaqashah; Muqaddimah li Naqd al-'Aql al-'Arabi*; *Al-Mas'alah al-Thaqafiyyah*; *Al-Muthaqqafun fi al-Hadarah al-'Arabiyyah al-Islamiyyah*; *Mihnath ibn Hanbal wa Nakbat Ibn Rushd*; *Mas'alat al-Hawiyya: Al-'Uruba wa al-Islam wa al-Maghrib*; *Al-Din wa al-Dawla wa Tatbiq al-Shari'a*; *Al-Mashru' al-Nahdawi al-'Arabi*; *Al-Dimuqratiyyah wa Huquq al-Insan*; *Qadaya fi al-Fikr al-Mu'asir (Al-'Awlamah, Sirat al-Hidarah, Al-'Awdah ila al-Akhlāq, Al-Tasamuh, Al-Dimuqratiyyah wa Nizam al-Qiyam, al-Falsafah wa al-Madaniyyah)*; *Al-Tanmiyah al-Bashariyyah wa al-Khususiyah al-Susyu Thaqafiyyah: Al-'Alam al-'Arabi Numudhijan*; *Wijhat Nazar: Nahw I'adat bina' Qadaya al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir*; *Hafriyyat fi al-Dhakhirah, Min Ba'id, Sirah Dhatiyyah min al-Siba ila Sinn al-'Ishrin* (Impressions on my Mind: Autobiography from Childhood to the Age of 20); Interpretations of and Analytic Introductions to Reprints of Ibn Rushd's Works; *Ibn Rushd: Sirah wa Fikr, Al-'Aql al-Akhlāqi al-'Arabi: Dirasah Tabliliyyah Naqdiyyah li Nazm al-Qiyam fi al-Thaqafah al-'Arabiyyah*; *Silsilat Mawaqif; Fi Naqd al-Hajah ila al-Islah; Madkhal ila al-Qur'an al-Karim: Al-Ta'rif bi al-Qur'an; Fahm al-Qur'an al-Hakim: Al-Tafsir al-Wadiah Hasab Tartib al-Nuzul*.⁵ Al-Jabiri began his magnum opus – a critique of Arabic reason – in 1984. At that time, it took the form of a book in four volumes. The first volume was entitled *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (The Genesis of Arabic Reason). In this book, he discusses the emergence and formation of Arabic Reason. This book was of paramount importance and had an enormous impact on the Arab world. Two years later (1986), he wrote *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (The Structure of the Arab Reason). The contents of the two books supplement each other. Four years later (1990), he published the third part entitled *Naqd al-'Aql al-*

Siyasi al-'Arabi, and, in 2001 he wrote *Naqd al-'Aql al-Akblaqi al-'Arabi* with which his magnum opus on Arabic Reason came to an end, though he continued his scholarly pursuits. There were different responses to al-Jabiri's critique of Arabic Reason and hundreds of books, articles, and interviews were published on the matter.⁶ Some such critiques were fair but others were not. Among his critics were Hasan Hanafi, Taha 'Abd al-Rahman, George Tarabishi, Mahmud Amin al-'Alam, Kamal Abd al-Latif, Ali Harb, Husayn Marwah,⁷ Tayyib Tizini, and Yahya Muhammad. By his own admission, it took George Tarabishi – a proficient translator of western works into Arabic – eight years to study al-Jabiri's works. He came to confront al-Jabiri's views in a work entitled *Naqd Naqd al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (Critique of the Critique of Arabic Reason) comprising the following books: *Nazariyyat al-'Aql* (1996), *Ishkaliyyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (1998), *Wahdat al-'Aql al-'Arabi al-Islami* (2002), and *Madhbabat al-Turath fi al-'Aql al-'Arabiyyah al-Mu'asirah* (1993).⁸

When he completed the project *Critique of Arabic Reason*, al-Jabiri tried to revise the understanding of the Holy Qur'an and his last important works were *Madkhal ila al-Qur'an al-Karim* and *Fahm al-Qur'an al-Hakim: Al-Tafsir al-Wadih Hasab Tartib al-Nuzul* in three volumes.

Critique of Arabic Reason

Unlike many philosophical works which are designed to be abstracted from objective realities and in a vacuum, or, in which the thinker only tries to explain past masters' sayings and statements and analyse their contents, like al-Jabiri's other works, this one has been written in response to the current crisis; for his problem is a real and concrete one, namely, historical backwardness of Arab Muslims on the one hand, and, the rupture of the glory of the historic, Arabic-Islamic personality and identity after the defeat of Arab countries by the occupiers of Jerusalem in 1967 on the other. This was a disastrous defeat for Arabs and the Arab world. Arab intellectuals in particular felt severe contempt and its effects are still apparent.

To solve this crisis which has caused stagnation and our backwardness, al-Jabiri

believes, we should embark upon a revivalist movement; and, to do so, we have to reflect upon reason governing Arab heritage. To attain this objective, extensive revision of mechanisms, concepts, and propositions concerning Arabic Reason as well as readings on Arabic Reason conducted over the last 100 years seems to be necessary. This way, constructive elements as well as those responsible for causing stagnation may be known; then, a creative culture (reason) may be established.

According to him, during the last 100 years, various discourses such as Salafi, Marxist, tribalist, and Arab and Orientalist nationalist have been introduced, and, to avoid errors committed by them, we have to pay attention to the experience of hereditary (*turathi*) reading.⁹

In a pathological study on reformist works of this period, he comes to the conclusion that, for the time being, Arabic thought in its entirety is unable to analyse and study intellectual, political, and social issues; and, all analyses conducted – even those conducted in recent decades – have taken a Salafi and non-creative approach which results in nothing but Salafism and a reproduction of the past which is a synthesis of the ideological readings of the legacy left to us (*mirath*). Thus, the fundamental principles behind the Salafi reading of the heritage should be discussed; if this is not done, all critiques, studies, and feedback will be ideological suffer from Salafism, and be unable to solve our problems.¹⁰

As said by those like Muhammad Waqidi, his project *Critique of Arabic Reason* may be characterised as follows:

1. A study of the properties of existing Arabic Reason. Since this reason interacts with various phenomena and issues, properties of this reason may be found through the study of such interactions. In his *Al-Khitab al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir*, considered to be an introduction to this critique of reason he tries to discuss this objective.
2. A study and recognition of Arabic Reason in terms of its formation and emergence in past history in order to find its historical roots. In this part, he says that this Arabic Reason is a product of three conflicting narratives

(*bayani*), mystical, and demonstrative, and, tries to show the way in which these three systems interact and conflict. He has done this important task in his *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabi*.

3. Study of the structure of Arabic Reason and epistemic and triple mechanisms, concepts and systems, the internal structure of each of them and their relation to the entire structure of Arabic Reason.
4. The stage of correction and reconstruction carried out through a rational approach criticising all intellectual and practical aspects in particular the understanding of heritage.¹¹

Thus, it may be said that his approach to this issue is firstly epistemological and based on an extra-religious view on the issue. He has tried to distance himself from this culture, and think about it from a superior viewpoint which is of the kind of the second order of knowledge, and recognise factors influencing the emergence of Arabic culture so as not to be imprisoned by ideological and political motives, unlike the authors of other works – or so he believed. Criticising traditional and Marxist methodologies, he adopts a methodology which is a synthesis of structuralist and simultaneously historical methodologies. He tries to pave his own way by separating ideological elements from epistemic ones.¹²

At the same time, we should bear in mind that what is important to him is not a pre-determined methodology but rather a methodology which can be successful in practice and solve problems.

Analysis of the Concept of Reason

Since analysis of the elements of reason plays a particular role in understanding al-Jabiri's work, and his methodology is founded on this concept, a clear explanation of it should firstly be provided. Here, by reason, man's rational and perceptive faculty, as opposed to sense and imaginative perception, and, the definition of which is well-known in philosophy and metaphysics – man's intrinsic property – is not meant. Nor, by reason, does he mean the contents of individuals, groups, and tribes' ideas and views which produce concerns, moral ideals, and political and social objectives –

called ideology by some. Rather, by reason, he means the instruments by which, and frameworks in which such contents and ideas are produced. Though these frameworks and instruments are, in turn, products of a particular culture, civilization, and social environment and conditions they clearly have no fixed quiddities or atemporal and non-locational properties.¹³

As a matter of fact, following Leland,¹⁴ al-Jabiri divides reason into two kinds:

1. Constructive reason and
2. Constructed reason.

Constructive reason consists of general principles, frameworks, concepts, methodologies, and all those elements which are, in some way, able to influence a culture and produce a new discourse. Thus, this reason is characterised by creativity and productivity. Such general principles and frameworks impose themselves on existing conditions, components, and elements, and influence them.

However constructed reason (also known as prevalent (*sa'id*) reason), is the common and current reason along with the principles and rules institutionalised and accepted within a culture and historical period; in this framework, it is of absolute value. However, in spite of its inclination to fixity and unity, it may be around in one era but not others. Thus, ideas, thoughts, conduct, and other cultural manifestations are based on its frameworks, whether or not the people of that culture know that this is the case.

Thus, constructed reason is prevalent, common, and institutionalised rationalism accompanied by a series of cultural rules and governs the way people think and behave.¹⁵

Of course, these two kinds of reason are always interacting and may influence and change each other. Thus, in his methodology, al-Jabiri makes uses of the doctrine of constructive and constructed reasons, and believes that even though people of various cultures are usually unaware of constructed reason and its analysis and naturally pose no objections to it, those who seek to correct things in a

fundamental way should take it into account in order to be able to undertake to make changes and corrections after becoming familiar with it.¹⁶

A question arises: do all cultures and civilizations enjoy this kind of reason? Al-Jabiri replies that since rationalist culture is firstly a culture the people of which think about various issues to avoid combining knowledge with superstitions, myths, animalist views concerning natural objects and belief in the impacts of spirits of natural objects on man and human knowledge, and, secondly, think about and reflect upon reason itself – of much more importance than the first property – in accordance with existing knowledge, we find no more than three kinds of reason which have these two properties – Arab, Greek, and modern European. In other words, the reason meant has been present in, and governed these three cultures only; other peoples such as the Babylonians, Indians, Iranians, Chinese etc. have been deprived of this reason. According to him, these peoples' cultures were based on irrationalities such as magic, gnosticism, and other non-epistemic things.¹⁷

It seems that, in his discussion on the structure of Arabic Reason, he has in addition to Leland's view, made use of Claude Levi Strauss' theory of collective unconscious structure. For example, in his *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (Structure of the Arabic Reason), he tries to take Arab culture along with all its sources – which he believes to be the culture of the Age of Ignorance, Islamic culture, Gnosticism, and Greek culture – into account;¹⁸ he then attempts to find out what the main and structural elements of this culture and components (which have gradually entered Arab society's subconscious and shaped their constructed reason) are, in order to pave the way to correcting and solving the problem. He works like a psychoanalyst, entering the patient's subconscious to recognise the causes of his spiritual crisis, and then make corrections to eliminate his psychological complexes.

According to him, to study and analyse reason, its internal elements should be studied and, furthermore, this reason should be compared with other reasons. He believes that, when the two are studied and the relationship between the two is known, valuable conclusions may be reached. For example, in a comparison between Arab and Western Reason, he comes to the conclusion that there are two

determining and important principles in Western Reason which Arabic Reason lacks:

1. the ontological principle, in the sense that there is a direct relationship between reason and nature and reason is not independent of nature;
2. the epistemological principle which concerns the possibility of discovering nature's secrets through reason, and, the possibility of correcting and corresponding-to-realities understanding by reason.¹⁹ The cause of the West's progress and the mystery of Arabs' backwardness, he believes, is this very point; for, in ancient Greek culture as well as in modern, contemporary European culture, there is a firm link between reason on the one hand and understanding and discovering what causes things on the other. However, in Arab culture (and even in the Book and Tradition), the same term and similar ones are inseparable from morality, and far from discovering what causes things and phenomena.²⁰

He thinks that even though the concept of reason in Greco-European culture has entered the scope of morality as well, and they have studied the issue of "morality of reason" (i.e. morality based on the idea of the "Necessary") in details, the important difference between Greek/European reason and the Arab mind is that, in the latter, movement is from morality towards knowledge (in other words, knowledge is based on morality), whereas, in the former, it is knowledge which is the basis, and morality is dependent upon it. He believes that in this way, the Arab mind firstly does not seek to discover the relationship between some natural phenomena and others, and, secondly, is not able to make the discovery. Rather, in this culture, knowledge is something which serves to evaluate issues (*masa'il*) and subject matters (*mawdu'at*) of knowledge and explain whether they are good or evil and whether they concern the society or the individual. In other words, the main function of reason and even the sign of realisation of reason is that to motivate the individual to perform good deeds, and prevent him from performing evil ones. This moral and value property is not specific to terms derived from the root "‘a, q, l"; but rather, it is seen in all terms the meanings of which are close to that of *'aql* (reason) e.g. terms

like mind (*dhihn*), thought (*fikr*), and heart (*fu'ad*).

In this way, al-Jabiri believes that Arabic Reason is constituted of evaluating things and searching for their place in value systems chosen by Arabic Reason as a reference and pattern. This approach reduces the object to its value and, as a result, to the meaning granted to it by individuals (and society and culture), and avoids objectivity. In contrast to this approach there is the objective one which takes an analytic and synthetic approach seeking to discover the substantial and essential elements of an object so that it can be reconstructed after analysing its main elements. In this way, he does not think that reason, in its theoretical and philosophical sense, which seeks to find external realities, can be found in the Book and Tradition.²¹

In his opinion, all definitions of reason, including Arabic Reason, rely on their own patterns of reference, and Arabic Reason employs some patterns of reference: the first pattern of reference in Arabic Reason is the age of compilation. He says that the pattern of reference is like a sailing ship in which the individual looks at others and at the world. The age of compilation is like a glass through which an Arab or Muslim Arab looks at the world. The age of compilation begins from 143 AH, and locations which have influenced this pattern of reference are: Mecca, Medina, Syria, Egypt, Kufa, and Yemen. Some of these locations are originally Arab whereas others such as Egypt, were Arabised later on. This framework of reference relies upon the transmission of points and individuals' memories and leads to the compilation of hadiths and transmitted sciences and then to the compilation of sources.²² He also calls this framework of reference "narrative reason". This epistemic-narrative system which is a pure Arab-Islamic heritage consists of two things: language and religious texts. By language, he does not mean its mere verbal meaning; but rather a cultural world so extended that each and every word carries particular values and meanings.²³

This narrative system which is based on language clearly has its own mechanisms, concepts, and impacts and produces a particular kind of knowledge and behaviour. This system which is based on analogy cannot be seen, is a consequence of the main system and emphasizes the principle of separation and negation of

causation between things; on certain points, it emphasises transmission and transmitted sciences without seeking help from reason to analyse them and interact with them. It is this very system which, in the field of scholarship, produces sciences such as linguistics, jurisprudence, theology, and rhetoric; and, in politics, it leads to the emergence of Islamic government in the age of the well-guided Caliphs followed by the Ummayyads.²⁴

After the narrative-epistemic system comes the second system (i.e. the mystical-epistemic system) which is based on Manichean mysticism and gnosticism which have Iranian, Indian, and other roots; he thinks that after the advent of Islam, this movement continued to live among the Shi'as, in thinkers such as Ibn Sina, and influences the Islamic world. He calls this mystical-epistemic system "resigned reason" or "unreasonable reason" in which there is no rationalism, and considers Ibn Sina to be the symbol of this abject reason which has caused backwardness and stagnation in the Islamic world.²⁵

The third system is the argumentative-epistemic system, meaning the Aristotelian-Greek system, which entered the Islamic world because of Ma'mun's will, though Ma'mun's motivation to do so had nothing at all to do with truth or wisdom (*hikmah*); rather, it was aimed at eliminating the mystical, Shi'a system.

He thinks that the history of reason in Islam is a history of debate between these three systems; in other words, it has been a history of difference of opinion and not a history of establishment of opinions. Thus, we have never managed to be successful in creating constructive reason. Though these debates were not so serious as to lead to the elimination of some of them by others, it was eventually the mystical system (unreasonable or resigned reason) which won, and the middle age was formed under the hegemony of this system the eminent representative of which was Ibn Sina. Even Ghazali went in this way towards the end of his career. Thus, unlike in the West, our constructed reason remained intact, no change or development occurred among us throughout the course of history and the gate of progress was closed to the Islamic world.²⁶

A Way Out of the Crisis

With such an explanation of the structure of Arabic Reason, how can we get out of the crisis? He thinks we should look for a historical moment, and this moment cannot be found in the system of Arabic Reason; rather it should be found through revival and emphasis on the movement of Ibn Rushd's rationalism, Ibn Hazm's criticism, Ibn Khaldun's historicism and Shatibi's principalism.

In the history and sociology, one should pay attention to the concept of the sociologist mind and believe in laws which shape social life and historical events and accept historical causation and the mutual relationship between society and economy, dialogue between reason and history. This is what that was missing in the pattern of the age of compilation. In jurisprudence, we should also return to Shatibi and Ibn Hazm's ideas²⁷ and free ourselves from the domination of "*language*", "*salaf*", and analogy which govern Arabic Reason.²⁸

In philosophy, we should pay attention to Ibn Rushd who is the historical moment of philosophy; for, Ibn Rushd believes in two important cultural principles conducive to development: firstly, this world is a manifestation of God's wisdom and mercy; secondly, religious belief and man's freewill are not in conflict; for, man's freewill is a manifestation of the Divine tradition; thus, reason is able to understand the causes of things.

Study and Critique of al-Jabiri's Views

In spite of their importance, al-Jabiri's views also suffer from some weaknesses the study of all of which would require much greater scope than the present article. We shall however refer to some of them:

- a) In his work, al-Jabiri only discusses epistemic elements of the Arabic Reason; however, he forgets non-epistemic elements such as myths and tales which have an influence on Arabic Reason whereas an unbiased and realist judge should not discard conscious or unconscious factors which influence constructed reason and culture. Tales, myths, and all that is handed down from the age of Arab Ignorance or other cultures which have influenced this

culture should be taken into account.

Like in his discussion about the structure of Arabic Reason, al-Jabiri correctly states: "Like other definitions of reason, Arabic Reason has been shaped by the course of history and it is not completely free of ideological and political elements; epistemologists should try to separate the two" and the impact of politics (as a non-epistemic thing) on other factors such as myths and tales should not be forgotten.

- b) Denying rationalism and epistemic and civilisational systems of countries such as Iran, India, Egypt and others as well as discarding many historical pieces of evidence on the matter are among the other objections which may be made to his theories. According to a great deal of documentary evidence, many Greek and European sciences originated in Iran (Persia); however, al-Jabiri completely ignores such evidence. Relying upon the works of the historians of science such as John Raw, Tarabishi shows the scientific and rational superiority of the above cultures and civilisations (and in some cases their precedence to the three cultures).²⁹
- c) According to him, the way out of the crisis is to return to Ibn Rushd's rationalism – since the latter believes in the two aforementioned philosophical principles. However, these two principles are not exclusive to Ibn Rushd; many Muslim philosophers renounced by al-Jabiri make the same and indeed even deeper points. Secondly, merely believing in these two principles solves no problem; for, in the Islamic world, many scholars have believed in such a view, yet the crisis has remained unsolved.
- d) The other problem with al-Jabiri is his opinion on the heritage. He sees only those things which, he thinks, are useful in solving the crisis. In other words, he looks at the heritage through the glasses of crisis, and the heritage only matters to him insofar as it helps solve the crisis. According to this logic, whenever crisis becomes so serious that the epistemologist, based on his own understanding of the crisis and heritage and the way to use the heritage, finds that there is no useful point in the heritage to be used and revived, the

heritage will become totally worthless, and no importance may be attached to it. Thus, al-Jabiri's view to the heritage is instrumentalist and pragmatist, not based on the theory of correspondence and discovery of truth. Clearly, in this way, there is no fixed rational standard, and all standards are determined on the basis of practical needs. Thus, methodologically speaking, there is no real difference between al-Jabiri and those who reject the Islamic heritage. It may be said, therefore, that he is inclined towards rejecting the heritage, even though he does not actually reject it. In any event, al-Jabiri has no fixed and unchangeable viewpoint to take as a standard of acceptability, truth, and rationalism. As he has said himself, he is on a ship which is always sailing and has no fixed point.

- e) If a methodology is directed towards the crisis – in other words, if his concern to find a way out of the crisis makes him return to the heritage – he will only see and use those parts of the heritage which are of use to him; however, there may be other elements in the heritage, which, even though they play no role in solving the crisis, they influence the way we recognise what we have to choose out of the heritage; leaving those elements out of the above totality may also harm the identity of other parts. The same objection may be made to Henry Corbin who is strongly spiritualist and whose main concern is about losing spirituality; for, since his work is directed toward the crisis, as a matter of fact, Henry Corbin sees the heritage through glasses which only allow him to see what he needs and not what actually exists.
- f) In his work, unlike political and moral reason, he does not pay any attention to *kalamī* (theological) reason; the reason for this is that the study of it falls within the remit of reformists and not epistemologists. Clearly this is not a good reason since the aim of his project is to motivate Arabic Reason, and, evidently, to attain the said goal, both the whole structure and various elements influencing formation of the structure should be known, so that any necessary suggestions can then be made. This cannot be done without

paying due attention to *kalamī* (theological) reason, which is a very important part of reason in Islamic culture.

- g) The other important problem with al-Jabiri is his unawareness of the concept of reason in Islam and in particular among Shi'as. He is so unaware of Shi'ism, its various sects, and creeds that his status as an eminent researcher is put in doubt. False allegations which he makes against the Shi'a show that he has no intimate or profound knowledge of Shi'a scholarship; and all that he has stated on the matter is, firstly, taken from non-primary and second-hand sources; secondly, these sources are the works of Dhahabi, Shahrastani and their ilk. Unfortunately, such works adopt a hostile approach to the Shi'a and a half-truths approach. In this regard, mystical and esoteric analyses and interpretations of Shi'ism made by Louis Massignon, and, to some extent, Henry Corbin and their impact on formation of al-Jabiri's view on Shi'ism should not be overlooked.³⁰ For example, following Shahrastani, he claims that, according to all Shi'as except Zaydis, man's knowledge is innate, and no knowledge can be acquired through rational demonstration, and all kinds of rational demonstration and syllogism – whether juridical or logical – are rejected.³¹ Because of his unawareness of 15 centuries of Imami Shi'a demonstrative and logical rationalist heritage – from the time of the Infallible Imams (as) right up to the present day and which, in terms of methodology and content, is strikingly superior to other versions of rationalism in the Islamic world – al-Jabiri alleges that rationalism is missing in Shi'ism. However, Shi'a hadiths attest to the opposite. For example, Imam Sadiq (as) is reported as saying:

The first, the beginning, the force and the structure of something is that without which it would be of no benefit. The thing which Allah has made beauty and light for His creatures, the people, is reason. Through reason, people come to know their Creator, that they are created, that He is the One who has designed them, that they are the ones who are being maintained, that it is the Creator Who is Eternal

and it is the creatures who are mortal. It is reason through which they argue about His creations, like the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon, the night and the day. In this way, they learned that they and the creatures have a Creator and Maintainer who is Eternal. Through reason they learn about good and evil, that darkness is in ignorance and light is in knowledge. These are facts that they learn through reason.³²

In this hadith, the Imam (as) mentions many points; what is relevant to our discussion is that all things have been epistemically founded on reason. In other words, to understand things, this reason is autonomous and even the existence of God – the Exalted – and His Attributes – may be recognized by it. Further, it is this very reason which is able to see the good and bad in things.

In addition, it is clear that his point that “In Islamic culture, reason is introduced in the field of value and moral affairs, and reason – in the sense of the discoverer of the truth – without being based on morality has no place in the Islamic culture” is baseless; for, reason as defined by Shi‘a is reason which not only does not rely upon morality, devotion or even belief in God, but is also relevant to all truths, not just moral values and the like are dependent on it. Shaykh Mufid explicitly states: “unlike the Mu‘tazalites of Basrah, determinists, and Hashwiyah among the hadith literalists, many Imamis and Mu‘tazalites of Basrah are of the opinion that knowledge of God the Exalted, prophets, and each and every unseen thing is acquired and cannot be innate.³³ Elsewhere he refers to Shahrastani’s aforementioned statement concerning Shi‘a belief that man’s knowledge of God is innate, and rejects it.³⁴

In his *Nahj al-Haqq wa Kashf al-Sidq*, the eminent Shi‘a theologian and jurist, ‘Allamah Hilli explicitly states;

1. that truths may be arrived at through argumentation while observing the necessary conditions and steering clear of formal and material fallacies;³⁵
2. it is necessary to discuss theoretical issues rationally and not based on transmission, and;

3. knowledge of God is necessary as instructed by reason.³⁶

Further, the works of Khawajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi such as his valuable *Usas al-Iqtibas* in logic and *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* were written to explain [the importance of] argumentation in discovering the truth; this is particularly true of his works on logic which are, as a matter of fact, a continuation of Aristotelian logic together with epistemic innovations and additions made by the Muslim logicians.

Among other allegations he makes against the Shi'a is that there is a link between Shi'a thought and hermeticism. He thinks that hermeticism is some sort of mythical and esoteric inclination which negates the authority of reason and founds its own intellectual bases on esoteric gestures which are in conflict with what reason dictates. Relying on what those like Louis Massignon say, he believes that the Shi'a have taken their philosophy of Prophethood, and the idea of Imamate based on the will of the Holy Prophet (sa), and belief in infallibility of Imams from hermetic ideas. According to him, the roots of this belief should be searched for particularly in the ideas of Hisham ibn al-Hakam who was one of the companions of Imam Sadiq (as) and was influenced by the views of Jahmiyyah and Daysaniyyah whose intellectual foundation was a synthesis of Neo-Platonic and New-Pythagorean as well as later Stoicism.³⁷

In reply to al-Jabiri, two points should be made:

1. Concerning the negation of or suspension of rationalism by the Shi'a, some points were referred to above, and it was made clear that principles and fundamentals of Shi'i thinking are based on autonomous reason, and propositions concerning existence of the Necessary – the Exalted, His Oneness, Attributes and Acts, Prophethood, Resurrection and many other propositions may be proved through rational argumentation.

The infallibility (*'ismat*) of the Prophets and the Imams may also be proved in the same way; the Imams and their followers believed in infallibility based on rational arguments, and not on esoteric receptions and gestures.³⁸

2. Hisham ibn Hakam was an eminent companion of Imam Sadiq (as). In the

historical period in which Imam Sadiq (as) and Hisham ibn Hakam lived, the Mu'tazilites were deeply involved in scholarly activities, and engaged in controversies on theological issues. Naturally, as the intellectual representative of the school of Household of the Holy Prophet (sa), on many occasions Hisham ibn Hakam challenged the school of the Caliphs in general and Mu'tazilite views in particular, attending Mu'tazilite sessions (either openly or secretly), and criticising their views through posing questions, debating with them, or writing articles and books. He was so influential in his criticism of the Mu'tazilis that it is said that important critics of Mu'tazilism such as Muhammad ibn 'Isa al-Warraaq and Ahmad ibn Husayn Rawandi³⁹ took many points against the Mu'tazilites from Hisham ibn Hakam.

Because of his ability to communicate the pure ideology of the school of the Household (pbut) as well as the activities of the 'Abbasid Caliphate to stir up disagreement and division among the Muslims and incite other sects against the Shi'a, he was accused of many things such as Zandaqah, atheism, and extremism by the Mu'tazilites and others.

Evidence of such accusations may be seen in the works of Ibrahim ibn Yasar known as *Nazzam*, Ibn Qutaybah's *Mukhtalaf al-Hadith*, and Khayyat the Mu'tazilite's *al-Intisar*. These accusations were made not only by Mu'tazilites, but also by others such as Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari in his *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* and Ibn Hazm the Andalusian in some of his works.

In the same vein, accusations made by some Shi'a contemporary to him should not be ignored. These accusations were, to a great extent, rejected at that time by a strong defence of Hisham by Imam Sadiq (as). The reason behind such hostilities was nothing but superficiality or jealousy.⁴⁰

- h) He pays so much attention to the impact of non-epistemic factors such as politics on the formation of knowledge that he devotes a small role to the impact of epistemic factors on the emergence and development of knowledge. This causes a serious problem in explaining rationalism based on

truth and reality.

- i) To evaluate the truth or falsity of doctrines and propositions, instead of just applying epistemic and logical standards, he also relies upon the existential causes for and factors leading to their emergence. In other words, he confuses the compilation stage with the judgement stage and sometimes thinks that existential causes as well as the motivations for the emergence of something are sufficient to prove or reject its content.
- j) Influenced by French philosophers, he believes in the temporality and historicity of knowledge which eventually leads to relativism. If we take into account some of the points made by al-Jabiri, we find that, according to him, not even general principles of knowledge are absolute and trans-temporal. This is how this relativism influences his views and negates their authority. Al-Jabiri's tribalism and the emphasis he puts on the superiority of the Arabic West to the Arabic East; the fact that this influences his judgment is one of his biggest weaknesses, some instances of which have been already noted.
- k) Contempt for Islamic culture and conversely exaggeration of the importance of western culture and civilization is the other problem with him which cannot easily be overlooked.

Though many objections may be made to al-Jabiri, this does not detract from his importance or the importance of studying his views.

Notes

1. It is said that presence of Napoleon in Egypt (1798) was the beginning of this process. Zaki Milad, "Tahawwulat wa Khatt-i Sayr-i Andishih-yi Islami-yi Mu'asir", in *'Ulum Siyasi Quarterly*, no. 18, (n, 1381 S.A.H.).
2. Confrontation with the West was not, of course, exclusive to Arab countries, and also happened in Iran and India. In India, confronted by Great Britain (with its hundreds of

years of presence in India), scholars such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan emphasised solutions such as revision of how the Holy Qur'an is understood and interpreted, the need for modern teachings, establishment of universities for Muslims and so on. Muhammad Iqbal faces the West in a different way. Even, Salafis, Ikhwanis, Mawdudis and similar groups were of influence albeit in different ways. This point is of serious concern even to Non-Muslim Indians; modern Hindu attitudes were shaped in response to the crisis of traditional society. (Ibid).

3. Hasan Hanafi, "Mashru' Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri" in *Majallat al-Kalimah*, no. 39, (n, 2010); Husayn al-Idrisi, *Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri Muwarrikh al-'Aql al-'Arabi al-Islami*, (Beirut: Markaz al-Hidarrah li Tanmiyat al-Fikr al-Islami, 2010), 15-23.
4. In this book, he discusses the readings of past masters such as Ibn Sina, Ibn Khaldun, and Ibn Rushd; and, in addition, he goes on to criticize and analyse their methodologies on the Heritage (*mirath*); and, employing modern humanities, he introduces new opinions on the matter. While criticizing Ibn Sina, in this book, he introduces Ibn Rushd as a thinker who has strayed far from the Islamic East. This is also why he admires him. In this book, he also tries to take into account the historical factors for the emergence of such readings. In other words, instead of the question "Which part of the Heritage should we use and which part should be discarded?", he tries to discuss the way to attain a suitable methodology for a change in understanding the heritage.
5. Ibid, 15-23, 20-21 and 24-30.
6. Out of all the books written about Al-Jabiri, few example below are worthy of mention: Hisham Ghasib, *Hal Hunaka 'Aql Arabi?* (n, 1993); *Min al-Istishraq al-Gharbi ila al-Istishraq al-Maghribi* written by the Syrian thinker, Tayyib Tizni (n, 1996); Yahya Muhammad; Abd al-Latif, Kamal, *Naqd al-'Aql am 'Aql al-Tawafuq* (n, 1999); Sayyar al-Jamil, *al-Ru'a al-Mukhtalifah* (n, 1999); Mubarak, Muhammad, *Al-Jabiri bayn Turuhāt Lalande wa Jean Piaget* (n, 2000); Fatimah Sami Farhat, *al-Ru'yah al-'Irfaqiyah fi al-'Aqliyyah al-'Arabiyyah* (n, 2002); Jinahi, Abdallah, *Al-Kutlat al-Tarikhīyyah min Gramsci ila Al-Jabri* (n, 2004); Al-Namr, Ahmad Muhammed, *Al-Fikr al-Imami fi Naqd Al-Jabiri* (n, 2005); 'Ali al-Makhlabi, *Kitab al-Tablil wa al-Ta'wil: Qirā'ah fi Mashru' Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri* (n, 2010); Al-Idrisi, Dr. Husayn, *Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri wa Mashru'*; Al-Daghir, Nur al-Din, *Dirasah Naqdiyyah fi al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir* "Al-Jabiri

Numudhijan”; a part of ‘Ali Harb, *Mudakhalat* (n, 1985); Abd al-Rahman, Taha, *Tajdid al-Manhij fi Taqwim al-Turath* (n, 1994).

Further, some individuals such as Muhammad Waqidi, Sa‘id bin Sa‘id, and Kamal Abd al-Latif have interviewed him and these interviews were published in *Al-Wahdab* journal. His interviews with Ahmad Barqawi, Ahmad Mazi, and Jamal Mifraj have appeared in *Al-Turath wa al-Nahdah: Qira‘ab fi A‘mal Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri* (n, 2004) and his interview with Ibn Salim Hamish was published in *Ma‘abum Haythu Hum* (n, 1998).

7. Marwah who had particular intellectual prowess was from a Lebanese Shi‘a family; he studied for some years in Najaf; then but then inclined towards Marxism.
8. Even though he criticises al-Jabiri’s work constructively, he sometimes makes unreasonable and unfair criticisms of him. For example he says that Al-Jabiri’s work is not original and plagiarises others in his works; however, he does not refer to any source in support of his claim. As an example, we may mention Lalande’s definition for “reason” which al-Jabiri quotes from a secondary source, claiming his source to be Lalande’s book, even though he has not seen this book; since the secondary source misquoted it al-Jabiri made the same mistake and this proves that he did not refer to the primary source. Such objections, however, have nothing to do with truth or falsity of al-Jabiri’s point.
9. Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri, *Al-khitab al-‘Arabi al-Mu‘asir*, (Al-Dar al-Bayda: Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-‘Arabi, 1982), 7-8 and 13-18.
10. Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri, *Nahnu wa al-Turath*, (Al-Dar al-Bayda: Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-‘Arabi, 1986), 11-19.
11. Muhammad Waqidi, “Tabyin-i Sakhtar-i ‘Aql-i ‘Arabi”, in *Naqd wa Nazar Quarterly*, no. 23 & 24 (n, 1379 S.A.H.).
12. Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri, *Nahnu wa al-Turath*, 11-19.
13. Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri, *Takwin al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi*, (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdat al-‘Arabiyyah, 1991), 19-26; Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri, *Isbkaliyyat al-Fikr al-‘Arabi al-Mu‘asir*, (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdat al-‘Arabiyyah, 1994), 49-55.
14. Muhammad Waqidi, *Tabyin-i Sakhtar-i ‘Aql-i ‘Arabi*.
15. Muhammad ‘Abid al-Jabiri, *Takwin al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi*, 14 and 20-30.

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdat al-'Arabiyyah, 2000), 254.
19. Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, (n, d), 37, 55, 254 & 333.
20. Ibid, 31.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid, 61-71.
23. Ibid; Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, 9-10.
24. Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, 131.
25. Ibid, 166, 193, 200, 225, 267, 286; Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, 129-254.
26. Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, 254.
27. As seen the above four scholars are from the Arabic West (*Maghrib*), and so there is no room for the thinkers of the Arabic East (*Mashriq*) to participate in establishment of constructive reason.
28. As we know, Ibn Rushd was Aristotelian and had no time for Neo-Platonism; however, Ibn Sina did, to some extent, rely on Neo-Platonic elements such as the system of emanation, existential causation, and the rule of *al-wahid*. Even though he relies heavily on the ideas of Aristotle, Ibn Sina does not consider him to be a thinker who is above reproach. Furthermore, Ibn Sina himself poses innovative ideas such as the necessity of existence through another which is seriously criticized by Ibn Rushd. Ibn Rushd says that Aristotle's point synonymous to truth and objects to Ibn Sina who makes some points which do not come from Aristotle. His objection to Ghazali is that his points against Ibn Sina and similar thinkers are meaningless, since they are not philosophers, for, they do not believe in Aristotle.
29. George Tarabishi, *Nazariyah al-'Aql*, (Lebanon: Dar al-Saqi, 1999), 25-29 and 38-45.
30. In one place, he does of course, admit that he does not have enough knowledge about

this part and about Iranian culture in general. This conflicts with his dogmatic statement about this system, and shows that his statement about Shi'ism, Ibn Sina etc., is baseless.

31. Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, 200.
32. Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Al-Kulayni, *Al-Kafi: Kitab al-'Aql wa al-Jahl*, (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa', 1985), 1-29.
33. Muhammad ibn Nu'man al-Mufid, *Awa'il al-Maqalat*, (Qum: Maktabat al-Dawarid, d), 66.
34. Ibid, 103-104.
35. To achieve this goal, he penned his valuable book *Al-Jawhar al-Nadid* which is an interpretation of the section on Logic in *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*.
36. Allamah Hilli, *Nahj al-Haqq wa Kashf al-Sidq*, (Qum: Hijrat, 1411 A.H.), 49-52.
37. Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, 225-228; Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, 326-327.
38. Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Al-Kulayni, *Al-Kafi, Kitab al-Hujjah*, 405.
39. The author of *Fadihat al-Mu'tazilah*.
40. For more details on his personality and opinions as well as accusations made against him and replies to such accusations, see Sayyid Abu al-Fadl Musawi, "Hisham ibn Hakam, Namayandih-yi Barjastih-yi 'Aqlaniyyat-I Islami" in *Din Monthly Book*, (n, d), no. 58 & 59.