

FIVE

Religion, Secularism, Ethics

A Concept of Critique

I

Evidently destructive and prone to serious error and endemic uncertainty, modern rationality can hardly be deemed the quiddity of humanity, as the moderns have come to believe. The essence of humanity and that which separates humans from animals are rather the attribute of ethics (*al-akhlāqiyya*), a quality from which all characteristics of the humans qua humans, including rationality, derive (SA, 14).¹ It is ethics, not rationality, that distinguishes the human from the animal, for the latter does enjoy a rational faculty, however inferior it is to man's.² It follows then, Taha tells us, that there are two major types of rationality, one devoid of ethical content, and thus shared by man and animal, and another that is guided (*musaddad*) by ethics and is uniquely characteristic of humans, making them what they are.³

Yet the modernists reject such a division, insisting on denuded reason as the form that drives modern thinking about the world. A survey of modernity's schools of ethics (Intuitionism, Naturalism, Absolutism, Relativism, and so on) reveals what Taha calls "intellectual chaos" (*fawḍā fikriyya*) that has plagued Western moral philosophy. Each school claims to have arrived at its ethical doctrine exclusively through rational methods, but this very multiplicity of claims to rationality is the most evincive demonstration of their incoherence. The incoherence stems from the fact that, as products of

the same modern place and time, these schools with their diverse doctrines not only cannot all be true individually; they must stand in their totality as a mass of contradictions. Yet, contradiction and incoherence are, by virtue of these modernists' own acknowledgment and insistence, the very stuff of irrationality.⁴ In order to escape this dilemma, they must each, in turn, admit that their form of rationality is merely one of many, and that these rationalities are by no means exhaustive, leaving the distinct possibility that there are other ways of rationalizing the world that they have not considered (SA, 16).

Having marshaled a list of general critiques of modern Western moral philosophy (SA, 15–25) that focus especially on Kant's works, Taha insists on two fundamental considerations. First, modernity has elaborated a "shallow morality" (*akhlāqīyyāt al-saṭḥ*) intended to avert the detrimental effects of its own projects (SA, 145). Put differently, this morality is not only the direct result of the modern operations on the world, but also a manifestation of modernity's own conceptions and logic in the construction of solutions to the problems it had created. "Modernity cannot create values and meanings unless they are of the same species as those (governing its) realities and phenomena."⁵ And if solutions are made of the same structure that itself caused the problem in the first place, then the harm the solutions attempt to avert or remedy will continue to reside in—in fact infest—the solutions themselves. A genuine and real solution to modernity's problems cannot therefore ensue from the structures of modernity itself. They must both be external to it and have a superior potency that is able to supersede the potency of modernity and its anemic solutions. Any proposed solutions must go deeper than those that have come before, and must "dive into the depths of life as well as the innermost dimensions of the human self" (SA, 26, 145–46).

Second, and issuing from the former consideration, is the central idea that the solutions to the modern project must find their sources in forms of rationality that lay outside the denuded forms that modernity developed and adopted, after it had ostracized other forms. One such form, which Muslims are entitled to advocate inasmuch as others are entitled to adopt their own forms, is enhanced rationality, which insists on the fundamental and foregrounding proposition that there is no ethical life without religion and no religion without ethics. In this context as in countless others, Taha avers the most obvious yet unaccepted claim, that if the modernists, Arabs included,

allow themselves to critique the religious through that which is nonreligious (= secular), then it is the right of the interlocutor or adversary to critique that which is secular or antireligious through what is religious. "If they allow the critique of Islamic ethics by means of the secular modern, then why is it not allowed for others to critique the secular modern by means of Islamic ethics?" (SA, 26). It needs no emphasis that the illiberal straightjacketing of the religious in modernist and liberal tendencies never ceases to be a source of complaint by our philosopher.

II

Constrained as it is, modern rationality not only precluded a robust critique of secularism through autonomous religious positions but also has utterly failed to address the full range of relationship between religion and ethics. It is an examination of this relationship that begins to shed light on the narrowness of denuded reason, on the one hand, and the expansiveness and inclusiveness of enhanced rationality, on the other. Singularly able to take religion seriously, the latter rationality views the relationship from numerous vintage points, including the complex historical, psychological, social, logical, epistemological, and ontological connections between the two (SA, 30). What concerned modern Western philosophers in all these connections was the rather limited preoccupation with such questions as which of the two directs or controls the other, which derives from the other, that is, whether religion constitutes the foundation of ethics, on which the latter rests, or the other way around.⁶ Or, still, are they separate from each other, existing as autonomous spheres that do not derive from, or prop, each other? The "philosophers" thus probed three possible modes in this relationship: subordination of ethics to religion, subordination of religion to ethics, and intrinsic independence of one from the other.

Advocated in early and middle Christianity by such major figures as Augustine and Aquinas, the first mode seems at least roughly consistent with Taha's position. His objections in this context are directed against those who denied the subordination of ethics to religion on various grounds, chief among them being the introduction into the debate of the so-called Euthyphro Dilemma.⁷ Limiting his reply to the general argument that only a denuded form of reason can take the Dilemma to be a genuine philosophical

problem (SA, 35), he quickly moves on to attack the second mode, that religion is subordinate to ethics.

His chief target here is Kant, whose concepts of legislating will and the Categorical Imperative are dismissed, and rightly so, as secularized versions of Christian doctrine. Such objections are by now familiar, having been made in forceful ways by philosophers such as G. E. M. Anscombe, who showed that Kant's notion of duty is little more than a Christian intrusion, a leftover from religious Europe that was surreptitiously allowed to wear an Enlightenment garb of reason within his recycled notion of the Categorical Imperative.⁸ Kant's method, Taha argues, is to use religion in order to suppress it through a humanizing process, this latter involving a double-pronged operation of substitution and analogy. Kant substitutes the concept of reason for the concept of faith (*īmān*), the concept of human will for that of divine will, the Categorical Imperative for divine command, human self-legislating will for divinely ordained law, and the concept of Kingdom of Ends for Paradise.

In Kant's work, the suppression of religion through analogy took the form of introducing secular equivalents to religious notions. As the source of ethics, pure reason is derived analogically from revealed religion, so that humans can now legislate for themselves as autonomous agents. And just as "divine legislation" is intended to enact laws that would govern humanity in its entirety, so is human legislation intended to be universal (SA, 39–40). "There is no doubt that Kant constructed his secular theory of ethics on religious foundations, having, by means of substitution, manipulated these foundations so that the human displaces God; then, he analogized the rules of the former on the basis of the latter. This theory is secular only in appearance" (SA, 40). The only difference between the two is that the human has now been installed as the ultimate source of authority. If this is accepted, then it necessarily follows that Kant's claim that ethics subordinates religion is invalid. It would also follow that secular ethics is nothing other than religious ethics in disguise (*mutanakkir*), making the proposition that ethics subordinates religion false.⁹

The third mode in the relationship between ethics and religion is their autonomy and separation from each other. The claim for separation derives from the central philosophical doctrine, initially propounded by Hume, that Is and Ought are distinct logical propositions, making it logically impossible to derive the latter from the former. The doctrine's effect has been to

carve out, in the Western application, an autonomous sphere for ethics, thus isolating it altogether (especially in G. E. Moore's system) from naturalistic domains of knowledge. In his famous passage on the issue,¹⁰ Hume makes a distinction between propositions that pertain to transcendental domains and propositions that relate to human beings, this being a move that aims to separate religious matters from other affairs of the human world, where religion is no longer associated with moral judgments. It is one thing for a proposition to speak of transcendental affairs and another for it to express sensory knowledge. The latter is no more informative of the former than the former of the latter. They are not only separate; there cannot be an instance in which religious propositions can provide the basis for ethical knowledge.

There are, Taha argues, a number of objections that can be made against the Humean conclusions, which have become central to modernity's thinking about religion and secularism.¹¹ First, the separation between the religious and the ethical rests on a skewed and highly constrained understanding of "religion," because (1) it relegates the latter to the status of theory that rests on a set of enunciative judgments (*aḥkām khabariyya*), and (2) it reduces religious rules to mere suppositions formulated by man to explain his experience in the world due to his failure to grasp the natural causes of things. Yet the failure lies in the inability of Hume and his likes to understand that religion is more akin to social structures and quasi-institutional setups (*ashbah bil-mu'assasa*). It is a set of rules and norms that, in addition to being enunciative judgments, also define behavior, praxis, and certain modes of living in the world, because these fulfill concrete and particular needs. They define the relationships between social and worldly existents, attending first and foremost to the need to garner benefit and to avoid harm. And since deontological propositions and propositional imperatives are necessarily ethical in nature, religion, which these propositions conceptually formulate, is as much ethical as it is enunciative (SA, 44).

Furthermore, ethics may subordinate religious enunciative propositions in that the latter's effects may be deontological and duty-inducing, effectively amounting to propositional commands that require performance, whether it be a commission or omission of an act. In other words, it is not always the apparent meaning of an enunciative proposition, but rather its *performative value* that is relevant and most important. In the proposition "God commands me to do such-and-such," it is not the actual event that God

has commanded that is the most interesting or significant, for the relevance is not limited to the test of truth-value verification. For the believer, the enunciative value is of secondary importance at best, because for her it is neither an epistemological nor an ontological proposition: there is no question of the truth or falsehood of the proposition, nor is there a question as to the existence or non-existence of the agent as the source of that proposition. Rather, Taha argues, the command inherent in the proposition—that such and such must or must not be performed—is taken reflexively, transforming the command from a second-person instruction into a first-person sense of duty. Thus, “God commands me to do such-and-such” is metamorphosed in the mind of the believer into “I should do such-and-such.” The proposition has in it the inherent power to transform itself from enunciation to praxis, one having an ethical thrust of the first order. Which is also to say that this type of proposition establishes a necessary relationship (*‘alāqa ḍarūriyya*) between command and performance. However, if it were taken to be merely enunciative, the relationship would remain probable, lacking, strictly speaking, logical concomitance (SA, 45).

Thus, the very statement “God commands me to do such-and-such” possesses the very same meaning inherent in the statement “God makes it obligatory that I do such-and-such.” There exists neither an intermediary stage of inference nor a middle term between the two propositions. Uttering the one would be identical to uttering the other, or at best, one would constitute an exegesis or explanation of the other. The subjectivity involved in the apprehension of the linguistic and conceptual range of such propositions renders Hume’s Law not only arbitrary but also insufficiently inclusive, since it fails to account for the full implications of linguistic structures.

Second, Hume is also wrong in driving a wedge between religion and ethics and in claiming that ethics derives its values from moral sentiments, feelings of approval and disapproval—e.g., esteem, praise, blame—in spectators who contemplate a person’s character or action. He distinguished between moral sentiment and reason, arguing that the latter is the slave of passion, that it alone can be neither a motive to the will nor the source of ethics.¹²

Yet, Hume’s notion of moral sentiment finds identical parallels in religious conceptions (SA, 45–46). The Islamic concept of *fiṭra*, for instance, is not much different from Hume’s idea of moral sentiment. In this tradition, *fiṭra* has come to denote an ethical feeling, a moral sentiment with which humans

are born. It is not a cultivable trait, nourished by upbringing or education, but a naturally ingrained instinct that has the competence to evaluate theoretical and practical affairs of the world.¹³ Therefore, one of two possibilities must be true: Hume borrowed this concept from the religious tradition either deliberately or nondeliberately. A conscious and deliberate borrowing is likely because Hume was deeply interested in religion as a philosophical matter, and in fact “devoted to it two exquisite treatises,” *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* and *The Natural History of Religion*. His idea of “moral sentiment” was apparently a way for him to escape transcendentalism in favor of empiricism, consistent with the generally secularizing movement in Europe that goes by the name of Enlightenment. On the other hand, he may have been indirectly influenced by contemporaneous writings on religion, writings that reacted to philosophical ventures which claimed that selfish interests and self-love drive human behavior, as exhibited most famously in Hobbes and Bernard Mandeville.¹⁴ Hume, Taha reminds us, was intimately familiar with the works of A. A. C. Shaftesbury, Joseph Butler, and Francis Hutcheson, whom he called the “philosophers of moral sentiment” (SA, 47). In the case of Butler, for instance, he clearly read and expressed admiration for his writings, and so he is likely to have been indirectly influenced by Butler’s well-elaborated concept of moral sentiment. Thus, both the substance and the means of influence or borrowing confirm the religious origins of Hume’s secularized concept (SA, 47).

Third, enunciative propositions cannot be disentangled or distinguished from ethical value, first, because there is no agreement whatever on this distinction among intellectuals discoursing on the issue and, second, because the distinction or lack of it depends on our worldview, assumptions, and method. Various conceptions of rationality and objectivity lead to different views of the matter, blurring the lines of separation between Fact and Value. Furthermore, our descriptive language, our narrative, of what is a fact varies among groups and individuals according to their circumstances and conditions of life, to such a degree that only a particular way of seeing things predetermines the results, but these are results we have *already* sought to reach (SA, 48).

In its general outline, Taha’s argument about the subjectivity of the split between Is and Ought, and between Fact and Value, comports with Charles Taylor’s and Alasdair MacIntyre’s critiques of Enlightenment discourse on the matter, a discourse that has in their view gained the status of a

metaethic. The split “does not stand as a timeless truth. . . . It makes sense only within certain ethical outlooks.”¹⁵ Like much else in modernity, it was made to be a sort of timeless and universal truth designed to “outrageously fix the rules of discourse in the interests of one outlook, forcing rival views into incoherence.”¹⁶ Like Taha, both philosophers have advocated the contingent, contextual nature of the split, arguing not only for the possibility that the distinction may altogether be false in the first place, but also that—even if we grant it any validity—there is no moral reasoning that can “do without modes of thinking that the split rules out.”¹⁷ This in effect amounts to saying, as Taha repeatedly insists, that moral thinking and the fixing of moral values and ethical considerations in modernity’s worldview cannot be achieved while maintaining the split. Another, eminently defensible “outlook” would be to view enunciative propositions in religion as fully capable of combining Fact and Value, if not being wholly made of Value (SA, 50).

As is the case with the Is/Ought distinction, the purpose of enunciative propositions in religion is not so much to affirm or deny a predicate’s relationship to a subject, but rather to urge reflection *through* the information conveyed. In other words, these propositions, more frequently than not, do not constitute statements about a thing in particular, but rather instruct about similar matters or themes *contained* in the propositions. What is significant in these propositions is not their factual content but the allusive power embedded in them, which in addition conveys the intention of the proposition’s author. Here formal logical analysis of statements fails, for the author’s status, power, or charisma determines the significance and extent of the gripping power of the contents. In fact, the meaning of propositions in good part lies in their power to “indicate” or “signify” their authors, for the more a proposition “signifies” its author, the clearer the intention of the language of that proposition, and thus the strength or weakness of its content (SA, 49).

It is a narrow modality of reasoning to think of religious propositions as amenable to the tests of science and theoretical knowledge, for religion was never intended to teach people how to calculate and measure reality, study it, and subject it to various tests of truth. The major function of religious propositions is to guide people in the use of science, scientific instruments, and ways of studying the world. Science and its instruments and methods are open-ended spheres, amenable to every possible way of conduct. The

very same scientific method, discovery, or invention can be used in vastly different ways, and for very different, even opposing, ends. Taha could have easily argued that science can attain sophisticated heights in order to unravel the majesty of creation qua creation (a project whose teleology is wholly made of ethical fiber), or that it can attain even higher heights in order to decimate entire populations and destroy the Earth—both possibilities reflecting the difference between, say, the Islamic science of premodernity and modern science. There is nothing essential in science that dictates its use in a particular way. The very same science can be bad or good, and it is the religious foregrounding, which is value-laden, that directs scientific and theoretical knowledge. It is about achieving the best possible good in life (SA, 49).

Revising Taha, one could of course assert that while a considerable body of science lends itself to his generalization—namely, the same science can be harnessed for different, even opposing ends—not all modern science can be legitimately subsumed under his categorical proposition. Much of science is inherently conceived from within a distinctly amoral, even unethical outlook. It is eminently arguable that the *raison d'être* of certain sciences and fields of knowledge is structurally and logically predicated on legalized notions of destruction, expropriation, or violence, all of which are subordinated to a global and expansive notion of colonialism. As I argued in *Restating Orientalism*, a whole range of academic disciplines is implicated in what I have called there a structural genocide, a notion that transcends its ordinary but constrained counterpart. One could also speak of the instructive field of astrophysics, which replicates, as a “genetic slice,”¹⁸ the structures of all other fields of modern academia. Instructive, because this field, among several others, had a robust and vigorous equivalent in premodern Islam (generally labeled astronomy), where it was *scientifically* developed within a cosmology that aimed to unravel the secrets of the universe as an intelligent theistic design.¹⁹ Modern astrophysics, by contrast, is structured by a logic of colonization, one that aims to “understand” the world with the ambition of mastery and control. It is not a minor detail that one of the ambitions of modern astrophysics is to discover a planet similar to Earth, inhabitable and thus colonizable.²⁰ The conceptual structure of this project thus operates on the fundamental modern dogma of instrumentalism, a project in whose inner layers hides

the assumption that Earth is disposable, like almost everything else in the modern theology of capitalism and its consumerism.

III

Taha's critique is not limited to Western modernity and its problematic application of Enlightenment spirit. The critique travels back to premodern Islamic intellectual history. He denounces the theological schools of the Ash'arīs and Mu'tazila for succumbing too easily to Greek categories and specifically rejects their ordering of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a, the universal aims and goals of the "law." Muslim theologians and jurists who followed these schools are said to have relegated ethics to a position subsidiary to "religion," advancing instead material interests over ethical considerations. "But is there anything in the affairs of man that is more indicative of his humanity than his ethical affairs? . . . Religion and ethics are one and the same; there is no religion without ethics and there is no ethics without religion" (SA, 52).

Yet, for this claim to be properly understood, "we must rid ourselves of certain popular beliefs about religion and ethics" (SA, 52). The first belief is that the main function of religion is to keep up rituals. There is little doubt that every religion requires a regular performance of ritual (*ada' al-sha'ā'ir*) but to say that these are necessary for their own sake is to misunderstand the true meaning and purposes of religion. The effects of rituals are to transform the soul into a better state of being, one that cultivates a moral technology for the soul's health. What counts in ritual, in other words, are the effects and not the actual performances, whether these are apparent or hidden, whether they are lodged in the soul or exhibit themselves externally as acts of worship.²¹ Performance is thus the means to a higher end, and it is intelligible only by virtue of that end. It follows, then, that the highest desideratum of ritual is the cultivation of morals, where every ritual is intimately connected with, and fully undergirds, an ethical value. The concomitance is such that the higher the degree and quality of performing works, the firmer the entrenchment of the ethical value.

Second is the misconception that ethics is a complementary or super-added quality, one that is appended to the individual's identity, say, as

citizen. Here, Taha seems at one with Iris Murdoch, who averred that the modern individual's ethical constitution is not made by the state, since the state does not seek to make him "good."²² But Taha goes considerably further: Ethics is neither a complementary quality nor a luxury, but *integral to the very constitution of the subject as a human*; it is, let us recall, constitutive of the quiddity of humanity, defining the identity of the human and of humanity, all at once.²³ "The existence of the human is not prior to ethics, but concomitant with it" (SA, 54). This virtual maxim, one might categorically state, represents the most persistent and fundamental thesis of our thinker, consistent with his claim that the essence of humanity is not rationality but ethics. In late modernity, this is clearly a novel philosophical position, of which Taha is fully aware.

The third belief that must be dispelled, following from the second, is the identification of ethics as consisting of particular virtues. For instance, there is a long tradition, extending down from Plato, that counts temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice as the constitutive elements of virtue, qualities that some thinkers have mistakenly thought to be both inclusive and universal. But the very idea of limiting virtue and ethics to particular attributes and traits (*mabda' al-ḥaṣr*) is flawed. First, ethics is coextensive with human actions, since to each and every act that can be counted there corresponds an ethical value. And since these acts are inexhaustible, so are the ethical values corresponding to them. Counting or quantifying them is pointless. Second, the very same ethical act may be dispensed with at various levels, giving each level a different meaning.²⁴ Third, far from being a numerable quantity, ethics is the way to comprehend the meaning of "limitlessness," since human acts are virtually infinite, and each act operates at countless levels of meaning and intensity. In other words, there is no cap on moral conduct and ethical cultivation because these *endeavors* gain in depth and magnitude to an indefinable and indeterminate extent. And fourth, the reasonableness of the human act may be viewed or judged insofar as it possesses reasonableness in itself (*min dhātihā*). But human acts can also be assessed insofar as they possess reasonableness by virtue of being in the world, that is, by virtue of the effects that all things-in-the-world exercise on them. Once an act is viewed from the latter perspective, which Taha terms *ma'qūliyya takāmuliyya* (complementary intelligibility), it ceases to be quantifiable or classifiable. Belonging

squarely to this *ma‘qūliyya*, religious rituals represent a way toward limitlessness, for there is no bottom, ceiling, or knowable magnitude to their operations on the soul. “Therefore, the attainment of limitlessness in rituals [read, praxis] by virtue of ceaseless performance is the attainment of comprehension of their Legislator whose unboundedness is infinite” (SA, 56).

It is clear that a critique of the Western diminution of ritual’s significance is intended to be only one step toward a more comprehensive theory, one that subsumes “ritual” and religious works within the context of the relationship between speech and action, theory and praxis. And it is at this juncture that Taha deploys a robust critique whose sources extend back to centuries of discourse and practice in the Islamic tradition. Yet, his critique gains in intensity because it is not merely a recapitulation of the Islamic historical tradition, an effort to “revive” a legacy that has met with much destruction at the hands of colonialist modernity. The critique, instead, is intellectually transgressive rather than apologetic or defensive. Its aim is as much to remold and recast a near-forgotten tradition as it is to rebut modern practices.

IV

A salient characteristic of Western modernity and now modernity at large is that it is a “civilization of speech” (*ḥaḍārat qawl*),²⁵ this standing in contradistinction to a “civilization of deed” (*ḥaḍārat ‘amal*). In the civilization of speech, a fundamental gap exists between words, speech, and discourse, on the one hand, and deeds, actions, and praxis, on the other, a gap in which the former dominates and oppresses the latter (SA, 59). This is represented in what our philosopher calls the “information flood,” where information technology, the communication revolution, and the globalization of information have permeated all forms of social and political life. The effects of this “verbal proliferation” on ethical modes of living have been devastating, particularly in light of the separation and isolation of ethics from various domains of life. One such effect is the diminution and thinning of the field of ethics and ethical forms of living life. Among other such constrictions, ethics and morality have been relegated to the private life of individuals,

a sphere that is in turn progressively both shrinking and thinning under the state's domineering power.

The progressive narrowing of the scope of ethics is thus further assailed by a process of straightjacketing that deprives it of evolution, flexibility, and expansion. Ethical formations of the subject have been pushed aside in favor of "legal speech," for law—or the discursive practice of the law—is now seen as the only means capable of social organization and of serving the public good. But "legal speech" is only a subcategory of "political speech," an extensive and intensive discursive formation (to use Foucault's expression on behalf of Taha) that is regarded as having the legitimate right to determine and manage the nationalist "spirit." Yet, "it is well-known that among all possible speeches, there is no speech that contradicts, and stands detrimental to, the ethical deed as political speech does," an argument that Taha will pursue expansively in *Rūḥ al-Dīn* (the concern of chapter 6). "Whereas the ethical deed purifies the soul and ethicizes the subject as a human, political speech, the product of the civilization of speech, has no preoccupation other than to engender love for power and quest for control," thereby producing a national subject, a citizen made of and by politics and juridicality (SA, 79).

The civilization of speech is characterized by its operations on two parallel fronts: knowledge and technique. Although knowledge precedes technique logically and ontologically, the two have become complementary and dependent on each other. They have both become objects of fascination (*iftitān*), to such an extent that the pursuit of knowledge has exclusively been defined and constrained by technique. The culmination of the process by which the two forms have evolved since the early seventeenth century has also been one that led to crises in the current forms of knowledge, giving way to the sovereignty of technique. In their aggregate effects, both have led to much harm (SA, 91).

Technique is the product of a practical method that depends on sensory observation in the creation and accumulation of knowledge. Experimentation comes to verify or falsify findings, which, once proven true, are elevated to universal laws that all human beings ought to adopt and live by. The method also depends on the derivation of structural forms and quantitative relations that govern the subject matter of study, thereby ordering these forms and relations in such a way as to permit them to yield further conclusions that are purported to possess certainty about sentient and insentient

objects. Scientific technique cares little, if at all, about “ontological density” (*kathāfa wujūdiyya*), the vertical and horizontal relations between the subject of analysis and the range and depth of surrounding existents, those that envelop the subject and give it its true and full meaning. Technique is then a procedural operation that conceives of its objects and defines them in ways, and to the extent, that these procedures can comprehend.²⁶ All that cannot fall within these quantifying and calculating procedures remains outside consideration. They are, in other words, suppressed from view. As is well known, a procedural technique is instrumentalist, transforming its object into means for yet another object, which in turn is instrumentalized for further inquiry and knowledge. This is combined with a formalistic approach to things in the world, without regard to their matter as value, thereby converting them into objects that come to possess an exclusively procedural dimension (SA, 114).

Procedural operations thus dominate the life of modern Western man, and bestow on him two types of competence: possibilities and command (*imkānāt wa-tamakkunāt*). The unprecedented horizons of knowledge that the procedural operation has opened up have enabled and put in motion the confidence that everything is possible, whereas the practical application of this knowledge has permitted the rise of an attitude of control and command, another unprecedented sense of sovereignty. “The difference between possibility and command is that the former is related to theory (or thought, *naẓar*), whereas the latter is related to practice and application (*ʿamal*). This sovereignty, in addition, has become boundless, having no fixed goal or limit. Yet the paradox that arises from this procedural, scientific operation of technique is this: the fullest form that this sovereignty seeks to achieve is to make total-man—that is man as a species (*al-insān al-kull*)—himself possible and yet, at the same time, in command of total-man!” (SA, 115).

The totalistic sovereignty arising from scientific technique has engendered another feature in Western civilization, namely, that of prediction (*tanabbuʿ*). Put conversely, prediction is sovereignty over the realms of theoretical possibility and practical command, what Taha might have also referred to as sovereignty over the future.²⁷ Thus, we may call the phenomenon of prediction-as-grounded-in-possibility-cum-command a rationality of ordering, in which reality is procedurally structured and ordered in a scientific sequence (*nasaq ʿilmī*). This configuration has also given rise to a set of attributes that have become integral to this civilization.

Taha here takes his time to elaborate subtle distinctions between and among concepts that convey the general meaning of domination, including *taḥakkum*, *saṭwa*, *ba's*, and *baṭsh*, concepts that he employs in specific ways, with nuanced meanings that are not to be confused with their lexical and conventional connotations. What is worth noting in all these shades of conceptual meaning is that domination is not directed only externally; it is, no less, a self-imposed and self-inflicted feature of power. It is the domination of man over man, and domination of the self by the self. "The ordering rationality of scientific technique is founded on the cultivation of capabilities of *possibility and command*, . . . all of which are dedicated to a quest of sovereignty over the world." The "possibility" rests on the effective logic that what can be done shall be done; and the "domination" is the totalistic mastery over all things in the world, a universal and unqualified domination (SA, 116–18, 132, 142).

At this point, Taha's reader begins to question his designation of Western modernity as a civilization of speech. As the preceding paragraph abundantly demonstrates, our philosopher is acutely aware of the rise in modern Europe of an unprecedented sense of sovereignty, one that affirms not only the death of God but also the crowning of man as the ultimate lord among beings. Since this rise to sovereignty is admittedly practical and effectively entrenched in *practice*, and since this latter is closely tied to command, control, and what Scheler has articulated as a unique form of domination,²⁸ Western modernity is hardly confined to, or characterized by, speech, however expansive this designation may be. It would seem that if Western modernity has anything to commend it, it is its penchant to *do everything that can be done*, an attribute that Taha, as we saw, himself recognizes. Yet, this does not, and cannot, preclude the characterization of this civilization as one of speech. Indeed, everything Taha says of this attribute and the mode of its manifestations in modernity is, I think, correct. But an unqualified and categorical qualification of this civilization as one of speech may appear as both partial and misleading. In fact, one could argue that the "speech" aspect is somewhat secondary to the practical side of things, although "speech" has undoubtedly played a crucial role in making "practice" and action possible, for "speech" is considerably performative.²⁹

One, furthermore, can confidently say along with Taha that "speech" in Western culture has converted unethical value into a new form of ethics,³⁰

with the support of denuded rational argument as well as an imperious philosophical tradition, both being major components in that “civilization of speech.” This is precisely what René Guénon meant when he also attempted to categorize “Western Civilization” by contrasting it to “Eastern Civilization.” But Guénon was more to the point when he described it as a civilization of moralism, in clear contradistinction to genuine forms of morality and ethics, which recognize the bindingness of higher principles.

That Western civilization is a civilization of action par excellence is beyond doubt; that the effects of its actions have been disastrous and very often unethical is even less in doubt. That all this has been legitimized and rationalized by “speech” is central to any understanding of modernity, but this speech *comes subsequent and is therefore ontologically posterior* to the more trenchant and powerful expedient of practice. For if we accept, as Taha does, that the European primeval outlook of “what can be done shall be done” is integral to the modern project—including its forms of colonialism—then this “doing” is the foundation of this project, however much “speech” was conjoined with this “doing” both dialectically and performatively.

One could even go further and insist that denuded rationality, a component of speech and the Logos, is neither the theoretical foundation nor the cause (or reason) of this practice, but the other way around. In other words, “speech,” as most eloquently attested in the discourse of the liberal tradition since J. S. Mill, if not before, has had the important function of clothing practice with what Arendt has effectively called, in the case of Hobbes, an intellectual ennoblement of an otherwise tyrannical practice.³¹

Nonetheless, there are two ways in which the idea of “civilization of speech” can be made sense of within Taha’s overall system of thought. The first is that Western modernity preaches ideals that it does not practice, or that the ideas (“speech”), however sublime and well intended, culminate through a logic of practice in results and conclusions contrary to or at variance with their original intentions, declared or inferred. This is consistent with much that Taha has already said. In the name of liberating man from bondage, European modernity instead enslaved and often annihilated peoples around the globe, and technique, intended to improve the physical human condition, did more than enslave its own creators. The second way is to say that the West is a “civilization of speech” because a fundamental disconnect exists between reality as an expression of practice

and what he might have called technologies of the soul. This is represented in the structural discrepancy between Sunday's church worship and Monday's business-as-usual, which succumbs to the paradigmatically sovereign realities on the ground. Yet, for this argument to hold, the distinction should not be one between "speech" and practice as *fi'l*, a neutral term, but rather one between speech and *'amal*, that which, in Taha's conceptual repertoire, stands for praxis, habituation, and technologies of ethical embodiment.

Although the expression of "civilization of speech" is painted with all-too-wide a brush, it is nonetheless difficult to see how this overgeneralization is detrimental to Taha's philosophy, for in his constant and consistent emphasis on the practical side of Western modernity (which has problematized his designation in the first place) there is ample and detailed acknowledgment of its role in his overall thought. Modern Western civilization is a civilization of action and deed, no doubt, but not the kind of deed and praxis that Taha wants, and rightly so, to see. Taha would have stood on the side of caution had he described it as a materialist civilization whose speech consists of moralism. More apt, a "civilization of discursive moralism" would perforce *presuppose* material and materialist ambition and all the forms of *fi'l* that Taha has rightly attributed to it.

It is in the nature of procedural scientific technique to legitimize those forms of knowledge that are amenable to its methods, on the one hand, and to marginalize and oppress those forms that fall outside its sway and capabilities. Whatever lies outside experiment, quantification, and calculability is pushed aside and out. "It is no wonder, then, that in its quest for total sovereignty, the ordering rationality of scientific technique would sever its ties with ethics, ousting the effects of ethics' subject matter from its objects of inquiry and barring ethical approaches from the methods it has established" (SA, 118). This is not to say that this rationality and its technique did not develop its own code of ethics (which can be seen in the practice of medicine, business, and liberal discourse at large, all of which exemplify what a civilization of speech means). Rather, what Taha seems to have in mind is that the entire range of the ethical technologies of the self has been obliterated from the sociology of knowledge, a claim that echoes Foucault's monumental statement that in modernity this technology has faded from memory.³² This unprecedented rationality and its technique have thus replaced

this morality by a claim of advance and improvement in the human condition, represented in the success of alleviating famine, reducing disease, and affording a materially better and, presumably, safer world.

The ostracizing of religion and religious technological works has amounted to the abandonment of the chief source that provided man for millennia with life's meaning and criteria for ethical conduct, all of which possessed higher power for ethical development than the materialist world that has been opened up for, and by, the modern subject. Materialism has become so pervasive that it has transcended economic gain and passed into the realm of man himself. What was once spiritual and spiritually ethical has been converted into bodily and concrete forms of benefit and harm, pain and pleasure. The limitations of denuded rationality have therefore come to be expressed by an almost exclusive focus on the body (*mi'yār al-taqwīm al-badani*), as it is here and now. In short, modern Western civilization is constrained by reason, oppressive in its discourse, in crises with regard to epistemology, and domineering in its technique (SA, 145). Total sovereignty has therefore developed a system not only of ordering (*naẓm*) the world, but also of reorganizing (*tanẓīm*) and disciplining it (*intizām*). The first has excluded and marginalized religion and spiritual values, what may be called metaphysics; the second has dominated it and additionally created its own substitutes for it.

The damage and devastation that technological modernity has caused led some moral philosophers to think of ways to correct this path of destruction. Notable among these is the German philosopher Hans Jonas, whose book *The Imperative of Responsibility* has generated a good deal of controversy.³³ A main idea of the book is that the adverse effects of technological progress are and have been unpredictable and that humanity is facing a distinct threat of annihilation. The renewal of ethics is therefore in order, a project that requires the development of a covenant between humans and nature. The central idea of the covenant is the need for a pervasive ethical responsibility toward nature, one that exceeds in strength and power any form of social contract. Fear of annihilation, in turn, constitutes the backbone of this concept of responsibility.³⁴ And because it is so interwoven with this concept, "responsible fear" (*al-khawf al-mas'ūl*) is unlike other kinds of fear that can prove debilitating. To the contrary, responsible fear propels and precipitates action, because it is entwined with the hope of averting

destructiveness. In Jonas's vision, fear then becomes a way of gaining consciousness about the excessive precariousness and risks of modernity. At the same time,

fear elucidates the possible relationship between irresponsibility and the human technical project. Since technology turns human action into an *irresponsible excess of action* . . . an ethics of responsibility ought to preserve "the heritage of a past evolution" . . . Jonas insists on the essential solidarity of human life with the general phenomenon of life. The complex dynamics of life's evolution has an ontological, transcendent and metaphysical meaning, and so humanity—as part of that overall adventure and evolution—has the "supreme duty to preserve it intact." As a consequence, mankind today is committed to acting so that humankind tomorrow will be able to *respond* to the outcry of terrestrial life, that is, it will *be able to assume* the ontological duty of responsibility. So this is our current obligation towards future mankind:

[Jonas argues that] "[t]his means, in turn, that it is less the right of future men (namely, their right to happiness, which, given the uncertain concept of 'happiness,' would be a precarious criterion anyway) than their duty over which we have to watch, namely, their duty to be truly human: thus over their capacity for this duty—the capacity to even attribute it to themselves at all—which we could possibly rob them of with the alchemy of our 'utopian' technology."³⁵

Jonas formulates his theory of responsibility in the same manner Kant states his Categorical Imperative: "Act so that the effects of your action are consistent with a continuing genuine life on earth."³⁶ To this extent, Jonas's work must be credited with bringing awareness to a rationality that has forgotten the true order of things and that has unjustifiably excluded religious ethics. His theory contributed to the understanding that prediction has limits that cannot be overcome without reaching peace with nature. Furthermore, it suggested the necessity of adopting two metaphysical principles, the first of which is respect for creation as an indicant of the existence of a creator. The second is the principle of stewardship, which makes man the ethically responsible custodian of Earth (SA, 125).

Yet, despite his repeated invocation of these two principles, Jonas shirks from teasing out their full implications, leaving them analytically stunted and thus incapable of reaching their full potential. Which is to say that his central concept of responsibility and its associate, fear, remain at the

surface,³⁷ because anxiety about the unknowable future is alone insufficient to infuse the feeling or compulsion of duty in us: it simply does not possess the full competence to reward and punish. Jonas has replaced metaphysical fear with an earthly fear, but the difference between the two is qualitatively great. The former is totalistic, profound, and internal, whereas the latter is partial and relatively exterior. The “future of the Earth” can be neither safeguarded nor given a truly all-encompassing meaning by such limited considerations as Jonas has proffered. The future must be secured through a cosmology that transcends our immediate existence. What Taha wants to say is that Jonas, in succumbing to the dictates of secular humanism, has substituted a human kingdom for the greater kingdom of creation, thereby reenacting the very principles that foreground Western modernity—the very modernity that has given rise to contemporary crises in the first place.

Similar limitations are also to be found in Karl-Otto Apel’s and Habermas’s ideas. From the adverse effects of technology, Apel deduces the need for what he called universalistic ethics,³⁸ a system that all nations on Earth, with their divergences and differences, contribute to the construction of. Such cooperation of course presupposes constant communication between and among their members, since this communication in turn assumes a universal and a priori set of ethical values, to which various groups in each nation, be they scientific communities or lay persons, conduce. The variegated and disparate contributions render this macroethic superior to, and would thus supplant, any form of scientific ethics, if for no other reason than the fact that scientific rationality and ethics are constrained by their own narrow vision of reality, whereas collective ethics represents and expresses the widest range of general and particular societal needs everywhere. Habermas, on the other hand, advocated a communicative ideal that provides the core normative standard for a moral-political idea of inclusive but free critical discussion in which interlocutors treat each other as equals in a cooperative attempt to reach an understanding on matters of common concern. This ethics of communication takes the form of debate that is grounded in the normative principle that the results and conclusions of the debate would be agreeable to all participants because they reap the benefits accruing from such debates.³⁹

Admittedly, Taha concedes, Apel and Habermas are successful in averting the pitfalls of the rationality that has commandeered religious ethics.

In their thought, ethics enjoys an autonomous normative function in debate and communication, one that is more than a match for science, for it is clear that communication has hitherto been confined to particular values rather than given to rule as a universal criterion. It has been subordinated to ethics, rather than the other way around (SA, 125–27).

Yet, Apel's and Habermas's theories of communicative action are lacking on two accounts, one related to truth (*ḥaqīqa*), the other to reality or feasibility (*wāqīʿ*). Insofar as the first is concerned, the agreement of the participants to the debate on particular normative common grounds does not prove the truth of that on which they agreed. The participants may have legitimate corrective demands but the solutions they have agreed on may not be truly remedial or corrective. Consensus of the participants is no proof of reaching the truth (*ḥaqq*). All that such an agreement can lead to is correctness (*ṣawāb*); but correctness is not to be confused with truth, for it is no more than the preponderance of possibilities, a strong probability at best (*al-zann al-ghālib*).⁴⁰ Truth, on the other hand, is nothing less than absolute certainty and demonstrative proof. Taha's point here is that communicative consensus is subjective, since it is not guided by higher, nonmanipulable, and non-contingent principles on the basis of which truth, as the most ascertained form of knowledge, can be judged to have been attained.

As for feasibility, Apel's and Habermas's proposals are impossible to achieve under the globalized system of communication prevalent today. Globalization's systematically unethical practices, consumerism, and deception in marketing and propagation of information have already had devastating effects on humanity and its spiritual constitution, on the psychology and mind of the individual and her ethical orientations. This "informational calamity . . . has been more harmful than the havoc that a nuclear war would wreak on property and life" (SA, 127). These truth-related and reality-related problems in Apel's and Habermas's proposals severely limit the possibility of constructing communication on ethical grounds. Even correctness may be questionable. We are thus left with one of two choices: either we seek another theory of communication grounded in an external, higher, and objective concept of truth that leads in turn to a *truthful* agreement among the participants, or we abandon this theory altogether, thus seeking a different route to ethics.

Similar objections can be voiced against what may be called the theory of weakness (*naẓariyyat al-ḍaʿf*), advocated by the French philosophers Jacques

Ellul and Dominique Janicaud. Both thinkers start from the premise that technique and technology have brought a good measure of disaster to humanity, and agree that what was originally intended to serve humanity has ended up oppressing and dominating it. The ferocity of this phenomenon even permits the formulation of a dialectical law that may be called the Law of Inversion (*Qānūn al-Inqilāb*): *Every rationality that seeks to reach the absolute limit of power will be inverted into its opposite, inversion itself marking the limit that the power of rationality cannot transcend.* Ellul, like Janicaud, thus calls for scaling back the ambitions of both rationality and technique by means of adopting a much needed ethic of asceticism. Clearly, such a deliberate approach to ethics calls for refraining from the adoption of any technical “achievement” until the effects and ramifications of this “achievement” are shown, to the highest extent possible, to be beneficial and not harmful. This Luddite-like skepticism must also be accompanied by a relinquishment of the rules of conduct that have already been imposed on us by the imperatives of technique (SA, 128). Briefly put, these two theories call for a deliberate adoption of weakness as a way of fighting back against power, itself the embodiment of strength and force.

Taha admits that Janicaud’s scaling back on the exercise of (denuded) reason and Ellul’s virtual boycott of technology and technique are steps in the right direction, one that brings them closer to religious ethics. Yet, their theories, like those of Apel and Habermas, remain shallow, especially Janicaud’s (SA, 129), lacking anchors in what Taha might have called moral technologies of the soul. Religion is the easiest, fastest, and most convincing way to accomplish this ascetic stance. Religious asceticism, whose emblem is the adoption and perfection of weakness, is precisely “the door through which the soul is strengthened in its encounter against the temptation of technique.” Without a structured, systemic, behavioral, psychological, and spiritual anchor for this “withdrawal,” Ellul’s and Janicaud’s calls would be inadequate, for they would remain lodged within a powerful system of rationality and technique that they can only theorize about but never transcend.

In sum, while the three theories of responsibility (Jonas), communication (Habermas and Apel), and weakness (Ellul) claim to revise the destructive course of the rationality of scientific technique by means of an alleged corrective ethics, they remain largely embedded in the conventional morality of dominant discourse and thought. They offer too little too late (SA, 131).

Furthermore, they not only remain prisoner to conventional Aristotelian rationality; they have also diverged little from the Western rationality of technique and domination. True, these theories do not subscribe or incline to a prevalent modern ethics that has distinctly and consciously distanced itself from religious ethics, since the sovereignty over nature it sought to achieve could not coexist with the practical application of this new morality.⁴¹ Yet, the difference between these theories and prevalent morality (Guéron's moralism?) is nonefficient, even irrelevant (*ghayr mu'aththir, bal ghayr mu'tabar*), because the mode of theorizing ethical meanings that secular ethics has devised is identical to that which these theories employed. Hence, their consistent and constant failure: "Before this or that reform is completed, new, unexpected problems arise from this very reform; and so they [the Western moderns] reform it again, only to find other problems that they did not anticipate. Superficial ethics are useless for solving profound problems."⁴²

Efficient critique—to stay with Taha's terminology—is therefore a revaluative discourse that does not assume as its foundation the same epistemological premises and ontological assumptions of the phenomenon that gave rise to the object of critique. Efficient critique must thus be an outsider, grounded in assumptions and premises that cannot share the same epistemological and ontological structure that governs its object. The three theories are all but lacking in both *tasdīd* (guidedness) and *ta'yīd* (enhancement), which is to say that they altogether miss the second and third tiers of rationality.

V

If it is accepted that the quiddity of humanity is ethics, then the "civilization of speech" can be said to have exercised the highest form of oppression against humanity at large. In order to exit this oppressive state of affairs, a renewal of the human (*tajdīd al-insān*) becomes a necessity, a renewal that in turn requires a radical and totalizing act of ethicizing (*takhalluq jadhrī wa-kullī*).⁴³ While not necessarily identical with religious experience and religious modes of existence, this renewal, Taha argues, comes closer to religious forms than to any other. "It is not possible for the old human being that Western civilization has created to give birth to this new human being without

an ethical transformation, one that most resembles the ethical transformation that the religious experience performs at the level of enhancement” (SA, 80). The reference here is of course to enhanced reason (*al-‘aql al-mu‘ayyad*), which yields enhanced ethics (*takhalluq mu‘ayyad*), both of which are seen as fully embedded in, indeed defining, a civilization of praxis and technologies of the soul, not “speech.”

To exit from the civilization of speech with all the “ethical diseases” (*āfāt akhlāqiyya*) it has brought about, and to pave a path toward a civilization of deed and praxis, the full meaning of an enhanced religious experience must be explored. As a first step, it must be understood that enhanced ethics is neither an optional mode of conduct nor a frill (*taraf*); nor is it, still, a super-added or complementary quality. It is as binding as law is, with consequences for violators and offenders, whose acts and misdeeds bring harm to both the individual and the community. The difference between the legal violator and his ethical counterpart is that while the punishment of the former is administered by an external authority (*sulṭa khārījīyya*) belonging to a criminal system, in the case of the latter, it is an internal authority (*sulṭa dākhilīyya*) directed by divine providence, and thus possessing a much deeper spiritual dimension. Whereas external punishment sequesters the violator into imprisonment that isolates him from his social world, internal authority sequesters the spiritual dimension into a form of exile, thus depriving the individual of access to the true meaning of life and good living.

Furthermore, enhanced ethics avoids the aggregation and lumping of acts with a view to dispensing with them in efficient and practical ways. Rather, it breaks down every single act into as many subacts as each agent can discern. And with each subact, the psychological element of *niyya* must be present—this being a central and profoundly important concept for Islam in general and for the intellectual and *shar‘ī* traditions of premodernity in particular.⁴⁴ Taha makes frequent reference to it, often by using it as an example to illustrate his arguments, which is precisely what he does here. As all major legal schools (*madhabs*) have long held, *niyya* occurs in the heart (*qalb*), and need not be accompanied by verbal pronouncements, although some jurists require verbal confirmation. It is an internal state, giving acts of worship their identity and separating them from other identical acts that do not belong to the category of worship, e.g., washing the face or handing over money. The latter might be an act of either paying alms-tax (requiring *niyya*) or simply paying for a purchased object, just as the former might be

either an act of spiritual purification or just a mundane act of refreshing oneself. *Niyya* constitutes an awareness of, and confidence in, the individual act as fulfilling a particular purpose that is categorized as an act of worship, irrespective of whether the act is ritualistic, commercial, material, social, or otherwise. Acts that cannot be mistaken for any other actions do not require *niyya*.⁴⁵ Thus, by attaching *niyya* to subacts, which by necessity are interconnected and thus constitute one larger act, the cumulative act would be said to have been accomplished fully, wholeheartedly, and with total engagement and dedication. This is an eminently self-conscious way of living, and a thoroughly attentive approach to the care of the self.

Clearly, then, the deep psychological impulse involved here cannot be limited to certain or select acts in the life of the subject, but must be generalized and must underlie all his or her acts. Whereas a corporate functionary might view the garnering of wealth with “wholehearted and total engagement, and dedication,” his or her gestures of corporate philanthropy may be nothing more than a reflection of a detached corporate practice we normally label “social responsibility,” just another way of enhancing profitability. To fulfill Taha’s requirements, every act, whether small or large, whether done for the self or for the other, must be imbued with the psychological energy of intention. Which is to say that the condition attains true fulfillment only when the same force and depth of this intention underlie, in equal measure, both quests for profit and philanthropy, for garnering wealth for the self and helping the poor.

This horizontal multiplication and subdivision of acts accompany a vertical layering approach. Each act has the potential of internal multiplicity in that it possesses ever-deeper meanings. Take, for instance, the concept of loyalty, when this attaches to certain works. A person may be loyal in the performance of a duty or a deed. He may perform the deed without seeking a reward. Yet, this level of loyalty may rise to a yet higher level of intensity. He may not see his loyalty in the performance of this act as worthy of the name, as being anything particularly noteworthy. He may, in other words, be intensely loyal without caring about the value or worth of his loyalty. A still higher level of intensity may occur if he attains a state in which he is intensely loyal without caring in the least whether he is loyal or not, and whether his loyalty is deemed meritorious or blameworthy by others. Loyalty is one thing, one level of intensity, whereas awareness of loyalty is another. But transcending awareness of loyalty is a different matter

altogether, a level of intensity that surpasses the two earlier stages. Here sincerity of intention becomes commensurate with the truthfulness of the performer's speech, and the truthfulness of her act becomes commensurate with her sincere intention. Thus, a single ethical act possesses a multiple and multilayered constitution, with each part and layer reflecting a particular ethical state (SA, 82).

No less crucial for enhanced ethics is its comprehensiveness (*ittisāʿ*), for it is all-inclusive, all-encompassing. Every single act, large or small, is tied to an ethical duty that must be present either internally or publicly. Ethical duty is deeply psychological, thoroughly social, and comprehensively communal and public. It manifests itself not only at the level of the relationship between man and God, between the human being and her creator, between the individual and the social group; it also manifests itself in all other domains that relate to all living beings, whether sentient or insentient, material or immaterial. Trees, insects, and stones are as significant as the concepts of wealth, time, or love. The "rock that averts one from impeding the path of another" must be viewed with awe, and the "times in which one finds himself living" must not be cursed, for both rock and time are spiritual energies (*tāqa rūḥiyya*) that are akin to one's sense of gratitude for the entirety of creation and its creator. The ethical act thus encompasses everything and anything, in the same way the Creator encompasses all his creation, for all creatures possess specific rights, exclusively belonging to each of them, rights that are ethical to the core (SA, 83).

Enhanced ethics, absent from the civilization of speech, also requires relinquishing abstract thought for its own in favor of actual practice. Discursive analysis, theorization, and rhetorical language are of no use. Action, praxis, and works are the desiderata, requiring commitment, consistency, and unwavering regularity (SA, 84–86). In the commission of the entire range of life's acts, the human subject as an enhanced ethical being is formed. Ethics therefore is a dialectic of performance and self-fashioning, the one generating and engendering the other. What one knows one practices, and what is practiced is what one knows.

This integrated ethical existence may be contrasted to the fragmented modern subject, whose knowledge of the world seems often unrelated to courses of ethical action. Taha does not historicize these differing identities, but it is not difficult to provide an illustration. Take, for instance, a typical professor in a medieval Islamic university as compared to a typical

modern professor of, say, moral philosophy. In the case of the former, there was, as a general rule, a near identity between knowledge in the “classroom” and the personal conduct of the professor in and outside of that pedagogical context, for the criterion of moral exemplarity was enshrined, consciously, as an ethic, a requirement, and a standard by which the professor was to be judged.⁴⁶ Personal rectitude (*‘adāla*) and ethical predisposition, among other morally grounded requirements, were imperative for practicing the “profession,” if not for qualifying to enter its ranks in the first place. Unethical conduct came at a price, not least in the form of biographical accounts that would record misdemeanors, and that would remain, as they did, a legacy for successive generations and centuries.⁴⁷ The work of the author-professor would normally gain or lose authority by virtue of these accounts. The typical professor qua professor then was, morally and ethically, an exemplary figure, one after whom the students fashioned their own selves, just as the professor had fashioned himself in the tradition of his teachers, back to the Prophet, and just as the students of the students were to do.

Compare this with the modern professor, whose personal conduct outside the classroom is not seen to be related to what he or she teaches, much less as a topic of ethical inspection and valuation. A professor might be teaching, successfully, ethics and moral philosophy from Plato to Kant to MacIntyre, and still be even “a successful psychopath” and a scoundrel of sorts. As long as he has not committed a criminal offense, he would continue to operate as a “normal” member of the profession. This example, exhibiting what I have elsewhere called a “genetic slice,”⁴⁸ illustrates, I think, the difference between what Taha calls the civilizations of speech and that of deeds.

A central characteristic of the civilization of speech is its inability to engender happiness in the individual, who always feels a lack, and whose needs expand progressively without being ever satiated. Our philosopher does not tag this dilemma in terms of negative and positive liberty, but this is in effect what he is arguing. “If the source of misery (*shaqā*) is the individual’s feeling of deprivation and lack insofar as (material) interests and greed are concerned, the source of happiness is his feeling of freedom from these interests and needs, and it is well known that enhanced ethics enables the individual to free himself of all that which is not beneficial to him, and to bring him closer to that which serves his higher ends” (SA, 87).⁴⁹

Consistently and systematically rising above these material and materialist needs has the power to free the individual from the constraints of desires and wants, a mode of existence that brings him closer to happiness than other paths, by which Taha means negative freedom. The individual's happiness is not tied to things external to the soul, on which his happiness depends, but it rather resides within the soul. "It is a hidden happiness, because its source, a spiritual tender, is never ephemeral" (SA, 87).

Finally, and against misconceptions prevalent in denuded reason and the civilization of speech, enhanced ethics is nothing if not aesthetical. In the Western conception, ethics should not encroach on aesthetics and art, on the grounds that ethical value constitutes an imposition, a coercive phenomenon that dictates various means of deterrence that limit and oppress art and aesthetics, when the existence of these depends on the emotive states of the artist. In enhanced ethics, by contrast, beauty and aesthetic values are ethical in the first order, because the relationship between this form of ethics and aesthetics is neither authoritarian nor oppressive. For such a misconception assumes an externally imposed coercive system of control, when this is by no means the case where enhanced ethics is concerned.

What Taha appears to be saying is that attributions of coercion and oppressiveness to moral and ethical formation are an ideological weapon that is intended to oppress true ethics and ethical formation in the name of the ethics of freedom. Positive liberty subverts this ideological campaign and, when seen properly, bestows on the aesthete the freedom to create as an ethical agent. In other words, the ideological biases that impose a distinction and separation between aesthetics and ethics are no different from the arbitrary distinctions that Western moral philosophers have willed over the Is and Ought, Fact and Value, and the consequent separations of law and ethics, business and ethics, and science and ethics, among a long series of other separations. Once the subject of enhanced ethics has transcended these oppressive distinctions, it would be readily clear that she can embark on artistic and aesthetical work while drawing on a rich repertoire of relationships between the moral and emotive, between ethics and affective taste. Art would then be a product of a free, self-fashioned subjectivity whose emotive and psychological depth makes for the true realization of (individuated)⁵⁰ positive liberty, one that can innovate with profundity, even with contentment and ethereality.

This psychoepistemological position is a consciously articulated and fundamental theoretical choice on which Taha insists through all his writings. The position responds to the claim usually, but I think mistakenly, voiced in the name of Foucault⁵¹—that a critique of modernity cannot transcend its own *modern* boundaries, leaving it effectively a prisoner of the modern condition. Taha, I also think, would beg to differ. If a critique departs from foundational premises that conceive the subject as constituted by techniques and forms of ethical cultivation drastically different from those that have hitherto performed the modern subject—a critique, that is, shaped by the critical adoption of modes of cultivation deriving from a long and *actual* historical human experience (which Taha constantly draws to his reader's attention)—then the subject that defines and shapes the cultural and civilizational project, which I have elsewhere called central domains, would be operating from a position that is psychoepistemically alien to dominant forms and their discursive formations. This would then be a critique that originates from the peripheral domains, those cracks, fissures, and margins that have the critical power to subvert central domains. But the subversion is *always* conducted through the route of the subject. This subject, the premium of this intellectual investment, would not be constituted by denuded and instrumentalist rationality, would shun the concept of negative liberty, would wholeheartedly embrace a robust *practice* of individuated positive liberty,⁵² would reduce materialism to a subordinate status, and would be readily amenable to dismissing technique and its harmful and oppressive consequences. The psychoepistemic constitution and structure of sentiment of that subject would erase the very inclination to sovereignty. This, in other words, is a new subject, a new human being.

4. RECASTING REASON

ethical and moral liability of the *individual believer*, the subject, stood supreme. This benchmark was not only operative but performative; which is to say that it was not only applied without reticence, but in the process of its operation, it *produced* subjects. The premium value in this configuration was moral accountability, not profit. Money and wealth were of such secondary status (despite the great importance Islam and its Shari‘a placed on business, profit and material wealth) that they could hardly compete with the fundamental, if not constitutive, concept of ethical duty, moral responsibility, and general accountability of the private, individual person. There was no financial or material consideration in the world, however tempting and important, that could alter or mitigate the benchmark of individual and personal accountability, responsibility and liability. This type of accountability and responsibility was irreducible and constituted the most stubborn feature of the entire culture.”

42. SA, 63: “*Bayna-mā al-ṣawāb an yakūna al-‘aql fī‘lan min al-af‘āl wa-sulūkan min al-sulūkāt.*”
43. On the Intellects, see Dimitri Gutas, “Avicenna: The Metaphysics of the Rational Soul,” *Muslim World* 102 (July-October, 2012): 417–25. On the soul in the larger framework of Avicenna’s thought, see the eminently useful study of Robert Wisnowsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 82–97, 133–40, but also *passim* (see general index).
44. Cf. the similar arguments in Muḥammad Sa‘īd Rayyān, *al-‘Aql fīl-Islām: Ru‘ya Jadida* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ḥaḍāra al-‘Arabiyya, 2012).

5. Religion, Secularism, Ethics

1. SA = *Su‘āl al-Akhlāq: Musāhama fīl-Naqd al-Akhlāqī lil-Ḥadātha al-Gharbiyya* (Casa blanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-‘Arabī, 2000), 14: “*Fal-akhlāqīyya hiya al-aṣl al-ladhī tatafarra‘ ‘alayhi kull ṣifāt al-insān min ḥaythu huwa kadhālik.*” In line with Taha’s concept of the continuousness (*waṣl*) of tradition, it is tempting to think of his definition of humanity as wholly constituted by ethics in terms of the “act of genesis,” not in the simplistic sense of creation *ex nihilo*, but rather as one of linguistic ontology. In the Qur’ān, the premier authoritative and founding text for Taha and the entirety of Islamic traditions, the creative design of the world is unmistakably driven by, mapped out, and pervasively constructed as an act of justice. It is a design that structures the world, temporally and spatially, from beginning to end. It would seem to be the first and last will or (should one say) plan of God.

This intentionality of design begins with a narrative of origins where the entirety of creation is embedded, consciously and deliberately, within a plan of justice, this making creation a consequent of this plan and therefore predetermined by it. Which is to say, as many Muslim intellectuals said centuries ago, that God cannot be other than just (and that he would be acting against his own nature had he chosen to do otherwise), although one may recast the matter by

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saying that God would not have interfered in a scene he could have easily forgotten about had he not wished to introduce to it a solution. God's intentional interference, simply put, foregrounds an ontology of ethics, but one, as I will argue, that is linguistic-ontological in its constitution. Needless to say, a solution by definition presupposes a problem, one that emerged in the historical process of creation living its life, and one that pertained exclusively to humans (*Banū Ādam*). It would seem at first glance as if the plan did not go as expected, thus requiring a correction. The narrative of the Great Fall, "Abrahamic" to a detail, appears as if it were a euphemistic treading over what might be construed as a mistake in the process of creation, and that mistake was the exclusive lot of humans (the Adamic era is here severely abridged and condensed into a historical topos or narrative-imaginary). Of course, it is integral to the attributes of God that he wills and does what he wants, and therefore a mistake can never be truly a mistake because he himself created the very thing called mistake. God the Omnipotent and Omniscient cannot fall into the very error that he himself created deliberately and on principle. The moment of the Fall thus becomes emblematic of a more complex evolutionary narrative ushering in an unprecedented consciousness that signaled the need—if not the indispensability—of installing a moral or "legal system of justice" within that self-conscious species.

The evolutionary narrative of correction need not stand as estranged or separable from the narrative of the Fall, for the two work together, dialectically and severally, in their appeal to the believing, or potentially believing, audience. For the ethically inclined beings—those whose quest in life is to cultivate moral existence—the empirical facts of the correction are of little concern, for what truly matters is not the always-illusive acquisition of historical knowledge, but the lesson that instructs in the ethical fashioning of mind and heart. A moral narrative or parable may be foregrounded rationally by no other virtue than its own ethical content. On the other hand, for those habituated in the determining weight of empirical knowledge, the linguistic rise of the conscience functions with the same power of conviction. The rise of the Word instantaneously signals the rise of the Law, that second divine attempt to bestow on humans a regulative plan that worked well with other species but failed so greatly in the case of *Homo sapiens* that a considerable and undeniable correction was called for. Thus when we deliberate over God being the Word that itself is the source of ontology in its entirety, what is being deliberated upon is the event of God appearing to humankind for the first time. It is then and there, whenever and wherever that may have been, that God comes to human attention and knowledge. For without humans in this world, no knowledge of God, or any god, could ever be possible.

But then how can a mistake, or even an indubitable cosmic plan of justice, be created between the originating moment of existential order and the linguistic end of that order. Used about a dozen times in the Qur'ān, the expression *kun fa-yakūn* (Be! And it is) emblematically marks this creative process, and at once ties together the domains of language, mind, and consciousness (Q. 2:117,

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177; 3:47, 59; 6:73; 7:144; 15:98; 16:40; 19:35; 36:82; 40:68). For behind every animal, plant, or stone in the world there are these three words, *kun fa-yakūn*, the precipitators of all creation.

The common understanding of this imperative is that God's words are creative. All he needs to do is utter what he wills, thereby bringing into existence all that the uttered words encompass. But how can mere words, however divine their makeup may be, create complex phenomena that far transcend this linguistic simplicity? Does the divinely creative word bring about an ontological reality *ex nihilo* or is there another possibility to interpret God's initiative, interference in, or regulation of the human world? Why did God need to create the world in the first place, and why would he create a world in which one species, the human, would give him so much trouble that he needed to enact for it a series of epochal scriptural edicts that aim to correct that species' morality and sense of ethics? For after all God did not reveal such corrective Books unto birds, fish, or reptiles; and the Fall (for all of its mythical and ethical thrust) has been one exclusively reserved for humans. It would seem inescapable to integrate the quality of "falling" into the set of properties making up the quiddity of being a human (precisely where the import of Taha's definition of the human resides). In other words, one might well ask, is there a conceptual dissonance between the Word as a creative act and creation as a "becoming" in consciousness? Or is it the very occurrence of consciousness, when the power that is creation effectively translates into an intelligible, conscious mode of communicative explicandum?

Rejecting the doctrine claiming Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the distinguished exgete Ṭabarī, among others, comments at length on Q. 2:117's phrase "*kun fa-yakūn*." Declaring God the "creator of Earth and the Heavens," the verse goes on to state that "When He decrees a matter, He merely says to it: Be! And it is." Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī al-Musammā Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2005), 1:555–59. What is at stake in this verse is that if God can be shown as able to create the world, then it is *a priori* that Jesus Christ can be created *without* a father. However, to reach this conclusion, several interpretive obstacles needed to be overcome, yet obstacles that prove instructive for our own concerns.

Some hypothetical interlocutors question the conditions under which such a command can make sense. If the thing is nonexistent, they argue, then it cannot be commanded to come into existence; "merely saying to it" would then not make any sense. A command *always* presupposes an object that can be a recipient of the command, for a command that has no locus or receptor is not a command at all. It is simply impossible (*muḥāl al-amr min āmir illā li-ma'mūr*). In other words, if the object or recipient of command (*ma'mūr*) is ontologically impossible, the command itself is rendered therewith impossible. The impossibility is demonstrative, just as it is patently certain that a command is impossible without a commander (*muḥāl al-amr min ghayr āmir*). The other possibility is that the thing commanded is itself already existent, in which case the creative order is redundant, if not meaningless, because it is logically impossible to bring something already in existence into existence. (Although Ṭabarī does

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not use the technical term for this logical fallacy, it was generally called, before and after he wrote, *istiḥālat taḥṣīl al-ḥāṣil*; Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī al-Musammā Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, 13 vols. [Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2005], 1:557.)

A third synthetic position seems to have been an attempt to resolve the logical fallacies that engulf such claims of creation. God, on this position, knows or conceives of all things in the world prior to their actual existence. They are mapped out, so to speak, in God’s mind as forms of knowledge without taking any material form; and as such, they exist only in potentiality, but not in material existence (or, in terms of phenomenological reality, as actual constructions of the human mind). Accordingly, nonexistent things that exist in God’s knowledge before their actual creation can be said to be “analogous” (*naẓā’ir*) to those things already in existence. And as being potentially capable of existing, they are susceptible to being commanded “into” existence, just as the other actually existing existents before them were subject to the same command. In other words, in one important sense, everything in the world already exists at one important level, namely, in the form of divine mental existence. (The Divine Plan of Justice is, incidentally, just an existent, like any other.) We can label this as nonsubstantive existence, whereas the actually created world would be material existence, even where materiality has to be extended to abstract values and attributes. Ṭabarī labels the difference in an equally, if not more tellingly, useful way. For him, the difference lies in the particular *state* in which things exist, namely, either in a state of existence (*wujūd*) or in one of nonexistence (*‘adam*). But for him both states, in the final analysis, *exist* (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:557–58). In light of the phenomenological import of *kun fa-yakūn*, it is possible to argue for a phenomenological understanding of the meaning of existence as Ṭabarī and his *mufasssīrūn*-colleagues construed the terms of *‘adam* and *wujūd* (existence and nonexistence). For Ṭabarī, God merely orders things to move from one state to another, or, as he says, “to exit” from the state of nonexistence into that of existence (*ya’muruhā bil-khurūj min ḥal al-‘adam ilā ḥal al-wujūd*), it being assumed that the state of nonexistence is a state existing *in potentia*. This would be consistent with the argument, intimated earlier, that the creation of the world as humans know it is the “becoming” or emergence of consciousness, when the power euphemized in the story of creation is in effect no more than the “*appearance*” within human consciousness of what I just called a mode of communicative explicandum. The moment of transformation is therefore not creation *ex nihilo*, for that form of creation exists no more than other existents themselves do; and that moment does not, in actual effect, bring about things from nullity. Creation is thus an act in which things appear in reality; and since human reality is the only reality of which one can speak, this “appearance” can be little more than the becoming of consciousness. Which is also to say that the coming into (or of) consciousness, being a linguistic/conceptual act *strictu senso*, is *itself the act of creation that is concomitant with the rise of ethics*. It is no wonder then that Ṭabarī categorically declares that “words (*qawl*) and actual coming into existence (*kawn*) are one and the same thing” (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:559). Therefore, if this conception of genesis is deemed plausible (even to secularist-atheist

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- reason), then it would make Taha's argument—that "man" is an "ethical creature"—eminently, if not forcefully, defensible.
2. This position, a reaction to Aristotelian and Ghazālian intrusions, gained momentum after Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210), who seems to be the first, or one of the first, to articulate it within his systematic *kalāmīc* philosophy. See Bilal Ibrahim, "The Forgotten Tradition of Reason: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the Expansion of Islamic Philosophy and Theology" (unpublished ms.), 16. I am grateful to Bilal Ibrahim for generously sharing his work with me prior to publication.
 3. SA, 14: "Al-akhlāqīyya hiya mā bi-hi yakūn al-insān insān" (but also see p. 147). On p. 14, he also notes: "idh al-ʿaqlāniyya ʿalā qismayn kabīrayn, fa-hunāka al-ʿaqlāniyya al-mujarrada min ʿal-akhlāqīyya, wa-hādhihi yashtarik fī-hā al-insān maʿ al-ḥayawān, wa-hunāka al-ʿaqlāniyya al-musaddada al-akhlāqīyya, wa-hya al-latī yakhtaṣṣ bi-hā min dūni siwāh." One would have expected Taha to pit enhanced reason (ʿaqlāniyya muʾayyada) against denuded reason, but from this statement I infer that enhanced reason is a subcategory, or a superior form, of guided reason.
 4. Here Taha must be thinking of a type of contradictions and incoherences that differ from those that ensue from mundane ethical endeavor, for these latter can coexist with one another in the practices of daily life since their teleology and deontological substance are one and the same. Intellectual contradictions within systematic philosophical discourses are a different matter altogether. See chapter 4, section 2.
 5. SA, 26: "Fal-ḥadātha lā tuwallid illā qiyaman wa-maʿānī min jins waqāʾiḥā wa-zawāhirihā."
 6. Questions that also preoccupy Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The Mark of the Sacred*, trans. M. B. De Bevoise (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 109–16.
 7. See Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, trans. H. N. Fowler, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1914), 3–59; T. J. Mawson, "The Euthyphro Dilemma," *Think* (Winter 2008): 25–33.
 8. G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1–19, at 1–2, 5; see also Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 55. Even if we allow for the argument that Kant deemed religious claims justifiable as knowledge claims—thus bestowing on them a cognitive status—such an argument nonetheless underscores "more clearly the different epistemic character of juridical principles and religious claims," this being a marked secularist differential. See Sorin Baiasu, "Kant's Critique of Religion: Epistemic Sources of Secularism," *Diametris* 54 (2017): 7–29, at 27.
 9. On secularism as a recycled form of Christianity, see Gil Anidjar, "Secularism," *Critical Inquiry* 1 (Autumn 2006): 52–77.
 10. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning Into Moral Subjects; and Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, 1898), 3.1.1 (pp. 245–46): "In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning

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human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. . . . [I] am persuaded, that a small attention [to this point] wou'd subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceiv'd by reason."

11. I have analyzed this centrality in terms of paradigms, arguing that a certain concept of reason or rationality has acquired in modernity a central domain, creating and affecting all peripheral domains. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 6–12. While Taha correctly identifies the central forces of modernity, he shies away from casting them in terms of domains and paradigms, because perhaps he insists on the distinction between the spirit and applications of modernity. In the theory of paradigms I construct on the basis of Carl Schmitt, Kuhn, and Foucault, I do not draw the same sharp boundaries between spirit and application, for on my view there is a dialectical relationship between so-called spirit and application, hence the difficulty in creating neat boundaries between the two.
12. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3.1.1 (pp. 245–46).
13. See chapter 6, note 8.
14. On the question of Hobbes's influence on Mandeville, see James Dean Young, "Mandeville: A Popularizer of Hobbes," *Modern Language Notes* 74, no. 1 (1959): 10–13.
15. Charles Taylor, "Justice After Virtue," in *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. John Horton and Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), 20; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 56–61, 79–87; MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1998), 130–31, 166–71, 189–91. See also John R. Searle, "How to Derive 'Ought' From 'Is,'" *Philosophical Review* 73, no. 1 (January 1964): 43–58; and Raymond Geuss, *Morality, Culture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 170, for Nietzsche's similar attitude to the distinction between Is and Ought.
16. Taylor, "Justice After Virtue," 20.
17. Taylor, 20–21.
18. On "genetic slice" as an epistemic method, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 9, 153, 224, 316n34.
19. See, for instance, Robert G. Morrison, *Islam and Science: The Intellectual Career of Nizam al-Din al-Nisaburi* (London: Routledge, 2007).
20. The literature on colonizing space, both popular and academic, is abundant. An example of the feasibility of colonization may be found in a lengthy study conducted by nineteen scientists and sponsored by NASA and Stanford University.

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- See Richard D. Johnson and Charles Holbrow, eds., "Space Settlements: A Design Study," <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/11517358?selectedversion=NBD1082782>.
21. This being consistent with my argument in the epilogue with respect to techniques/technologies as pliable and even mutable.
 22. Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Random House, 2003), 350, 357.
 23. SA, 54: "Al-akhlāq laysat kamālāt, bi-ma'nā ziyādāt lā ḍarara 'alā al-huwiyya al-insāniyya fi tarkihā, wa-innamā hiya ḍarūrāt lā taqūm hādhihi al-huwiyya bi-dūnihā, bi-haythu idhā fuqīdat hādhihi al-ḍarūrāt fuqīdat al-huwiyya."
 24. Taha does not provide an example to illustrate this claim, but one can conjecture that the very same amount of charitable donation possesses various levels of meaning when given to a political party, to an art museum, or to an impoverished peasant family in a poor country. It also matters much *who* gives the donation—a peasant, a billionaire.
 25. In the specific context of this discourse, ḥaḍāra may also be readily translated as "culture." Thus, ḥaḍārat qawl/ḥaḍārat fi'l may be rendered as "culture of speech/culture of praxis" (or "of deed").
 26. On procedure and procedural technique, see chapter 3, section 2 (Globalization), and note 47 therein.
 27. I have pursued the issue of sovereignty over the future in Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 199–202.
 28. Max Scheler, *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Manfred Frings (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 28.
 29. For my reservations about the categorical claim to "linguistic performativity," see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 61–64.
 30. A prominent example in point is the fabrication of the distinction between Is and Ought, and between Fact and Value, which becomes, with Hume (mid-eighteenth century), an ennobled and dominant philosophical distinction whose "practical" and material manifestations began to appear on the scene in the late sixteenth century, if not earlier. See Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 84–88.
 31. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1976), 139–47. Arendt remarks that "Hobbes's deep distrust of the whole Western tradition of political thought will not surprise us if we remember that he wanted nothing more nor less than the justification of Tyranny which, though it has occurred many times in Western history, has never been honored with a philosophical foundation" (144). It is arguable, however, that J. S. Mill, like Kant before him, cannot be reduced to what we have come to call a "classical liberal" affiliation, and that his philosophy allowed for extraliberal components that seem to have been suppressed in the interpretation of later liberal tradition. See Giorgios Varouxakis, *Liberty Abroad: J. S. Mill on International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). What is more significant than what a philosopher "truly" upheld in terms of ideas or doctrines is how he or she is canonized, and what the philosopher is paradigmatically made to stand for.
 32. M. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1994), 223–51, at 224–26.

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33. Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
34. Although Jonas scholars do not seem to agree on the extent to which his concept of responsibility is grounded in fear. See Roberto Franzini Tibaldeo, "The Heuristics of Fear: Can the Ambivalence of Fear Teach Us Anything in the Technological Age?," *Ethics of Progress* 6, no. 1 (2015): 225–38, at 230n10.
35. Tibaldeo, 230.
36. Further on this, see Damien Bazin, "A Reading of the Conception of Man in Hans Jonas' Works: Between Nature and Responsibility, an Environmental Ethics Approach," *Éthique et économique/Ethics and Economics* 2, no. 2 (2004): 1–17; Eric Pommier, "Life and Anthropology: A Discussion Between Kantian Criticism and Jonasian Ontology," *Giornale Critico di Storia delle Idee* 14 (2015): 123–36.
37. SA, 125: "Addā bihi [Jonas] ilā al-wuqū' fī ḍaḥālat al-idrāk li-ma'nā al-mas'ūliyya."
38. See, for instance, Karl-Otto Apel, "How to Ground a Universalistic Ethics of Co-Responsibility for the Effects of Collective Actions and Activities?," *Philosophica* 52, no. 2 (1993): 9–29.
39. For a critique of Habermas's theory, see RD, 152–75.
40. In Uṣūl al-Fiqh and all juridical discourse, knowledge (ʿilm) is graded in terms of certainty and probability, the only two categories that can engender validity in propositions. Thus, a ḥukmī proposition is probably true, which is to say that it is more likely to be true than not. This probability is graded in terms of strength since some propositions are likely to be truer than other probably true propositions. There is then a series of designations that describe this gradation, ranging from mere ḥukm (probability), to ḡhālīb al-ḥukm (strong probability = al-ḥukm al-ḡhālīb = al-ḥukm al-qawī), to al-ḥukm al-mutākhim lil-yaqīn, a degree of probability that is "adjacent to certainty." Yaqīn is certainty, obviously neither divisible nor graded.
41. SA, 130: "Li-ta'adhdhur ijtimā' al-siyāda 'alā al-ṭabī'a ma' al-'amal bi-hādhihi al-akhlāq."
42. SA, 145–46: "Akhlāq al-saṭḥ lā tanfa' fil-khurūj min āfāt al-'umq."
43. For an elaboration of the concept of the new human, see epilogue.
44. For a useful account of niyya, see Paul R. Powers, *Intent in Islamic Law: Motive and Meaning in Medieval Sunnī Fiqh* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).
45. Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī al-Kabīr*, ed. 'Alī Mu'awwaḍ and 'Ādil 'Abd al-Mawjūd, 18 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994), 1:87–92; Powers, *Intent*, 32–33; Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 120–22, 133–34, 217.
46. 'Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Faqīh wal-Mutafaqqih*, ed. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān and 'Ādil al-'Azāzī, 2 vols. (Jedda: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1996), 1:26ff.; Māwardī, *dab al-Dīn wal-Dunyā* (Jedda: Dār al-Minhāj, 2013), 119ff.
47. See Megan Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13–20.
48. On "genetic slices" as epistemological categories, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 9, 153, 224, 316n34. On the successful psychopath, see 192–94.
49. Elsewhere, he directly addresses the concept of negative liberty in the context of pluralism. See Taha, *Ta'addudiyat al-Qiyam: Mā Madāha? Wa-mā Ḥudūduhā?* (Marrakech: al-Maṭba'a wal-Wirāqa al-Waṭaniyya, 2001), 19 and passim.

50. As I will show in the epilogue, Taha's concept of positive liberty does not tally with the Berlinian one, since it is not subject to state interference. The qualification "individuated" constitutes the difference, and points to the individual as the autonomous agent in the exercise of positive freedom.
51. In *Restating Orientalism*, I reject this interpretation, ascribing to Foucault a theory of exit, at least in principle. In principle, because Foucault's project was clearly not about finding solutions but rather was one centered on diagnosing problems. One may even be tempted to say that Foucault was not equipped, because of the assumptions in which he grounded himself, to offer effective or meaningful solutions.
52. See note 50, and epilogue.

6. Sovereignty, Ethical Management, and Trusteeship

1. *RD* = *Rūḥ al-Dīn: Min Ḍiq al-'Almāniyya ilā Si'at al-I'timāniyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 2012).
2. For an incisive critique, see Gil Anidjar, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Christianity," *Interventions* 11, no. 3 (2009): 367–93.
3. *RD*, 510: "*Al-rūḥ amrun khaṭfī min warā' al-naḥs, yuz'ijuhā ilā al-khayr, wa-yaṣīlu ṣāḥibahu bil-'ālam al-ghaybiy matā dakhala fī a'māli al-tazkiya wa-hifzi ḥuqūqi al-amānāt.*" For a definition of "yuz'ij/iz'āj" (here roughly translated as "agitate" or "disturb"), see *RD*, 511, and section 6 of this chapter.
4. Note the similarities between Taha's views here and those of the distinguished Ṣūfīs Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Riyāḍat al-Nafs*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2005); Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-Farq Bayna al-Ṣadr wal-Qalb wal-Fu'ād wal-Lubb*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sāyih (Cairo: Markaz al-Kitāb lil-Nashr, n.d.), esp. at 33–34; and Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū Bakr Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya fī Iṣlāḥ al-Mamlaka al-Insāniyya*, ed. 'Āṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), 10, 26, 34–36. However, Taha seems less inclined than, for instance, Ibn 'Arabī, to credit the *nafs* with the ability to procure ethical effects and goodness.
5. *AD*, 51: "*Al-insān muzdawij al-wujūd iḍṭirāran lā ikhtiyāran.*"
6. *AD*, 28–31. For his definition of "man" as ethical, not rational, see chapter 5, section 1. Further on horizontality and verticality, see Muḥammad Sa'īd Rayyān, *al-'Aql fil-Islām: Ru'ya Jadīda* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ḥaḍāra al-'Arabiyya, 2012), 9–11.
7. *Rāziq* is used here in reference to one of God's names, *al-Razzāq*, He who bestows material and other benefits on humans.
8. *Fiṭra* meant several things, depending on the context. At a basic level, it is an inborn original disposition through which humans perceive things in the world. Intelligence and stupidity, and anything in between, are attributes determined by *fiṭra*, which is to say that *fiṭra* is relative, with some people having a sharper "disposition" than others. For Fārābī as well as for Ghazālī, as Griffel tells us, it also meant—at this level—a natural ability or talent. For Ibn Sīnā, *fiṭra* is a judgment or proposition that all human beings possess in common, and are able to

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