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Tradition and Critique in Kant and al-Jabri

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Abstract

In this paper, I focus on Kant's notion of God, showing that his critical philosophy changed the meaning and function of traditional concepts. Then I move on to consider a philosopher of the contemporary Arab world, al-Jabri, who has been influenced by Kant: the author of the *Critique of Arab Reason* shares with Kant a dissatisfaction regarding a certain use of reason which does not inquire about its boundaries. Philosophy must confront its tradition, free it from prejudices, search for reasons and investigate the origin and uses of its concepts, but critically analysing tradition does not imply that the past cannot help charting the path of the future. A fresh reading of tradition could help modernize Islam without losing the cultural elements of identity.

Keywords: tradition; critique; Kant; al-Jabri; God.

Resumen

En este artículo me centro en la noción de Dios de Kant. Muestro que su filosofía crítica cambió el significado y la función de conceptos tradicionales. Después discuto a un filósofo del mundo árabe contemporáneo, al-Jabri, quien fue influenciado por Kant: el autor de la *Crítica de la razón árabe* comparte con Kant una insatisfacción respecto a cierto uso de la razón que no indaga sobre sus límites. La filosofía debe enfrentarse a su tradición, liberarse de prejuicios, buscar razones e investigar el origen y los usos de sus conceptos, pero analizar críticamente la tradición no implica que el pasado no pueda ayudar a trazar el camino para el futuro. Una nueva lectura de la tradición podría ayudar a modernizar el Islam sin perder elementos culturales de identidad.

Palabras clave: tradición; crítica; Kant; al-Yabri; Dios.

1. Tradition in Kant

Kant explicitly refers to "tradition" in two spheres: the legal context and the religious-historical one.

More specifically, in the legal domain, tradition (*traditio*) means the transfer of the contractually promised thing to the contracting party (6:275),[1] while in a second sense[2] it refers to oral transmission concerning history and revelation (6:104, 156 & 167). I will not focus here on these explicit occurrences of the term in Kant's works, but rather on tradition as a material, cultural, linguistic, social, and psychological legacy—including philosophical notions—inherited from our ancestors. More specifically, I will focus on Kant's methodology when confronted with inherited philosophical terms and problematics, including, in the first place, the question of God. Kant aims to consider each notion inherited from the metaphysical tradition in a critical way, that is, to inquire into

[1] Citations to Kant will be to the *Akademie Ausgabe* by volume and page, except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where citations will use the standard A/B edition pagination. English quotations will be from the Cambridge edition of Kant's works.

[2] For instance, regarding the Chinese, Kant claims that because their archives were destroyed, their history consists almost entirely of traditions (9:381). An analogous use of "tradition" is present in Kant's philosophy of religion and it usually concerns the content of revelation (8:134). However, if it refers to facts that are not subjected to reason, might become superstitions (8:145), and should be considered a sheer "leading-string" (6:121) no longer necessary for mature human beings. The strongest support of statutory Christian faith, for instance, cannot be provided by tradition, but by sacred scripture, in order to preserve "its universal and uniform diffusion" (6:106). Besides, it is historically proven that "never could a faith based on scripture be eradicated by even the most devastating political revolutions, whereas a faith based on tradition and ancient public observances meets its downfall as soon as the state breaks down" (6:107). Still, a community founded solely on sacred scripture, traditions, and their interpretations contrasts with the one true natural religion, the tenets of faith of which are founded in general human reason (cfr. 6:106ff & 155). From this, a tension between reason and tradition arises, as we will later see by considering the relationship between pure rational faith and traditional ones.

its origin, use, and limits (*KrV*:A12/B26). Mohammad al-Jabri will adopt a similar attitude, although in a very different context.

I will now give an example of Kant's critical relation to his philosophical tradition, showing how he applies this reflection to the notion of God.[3]

1.1 Reflection as a condition for cognition

The appendix *On the Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection Through the Confusion of the Empirical Use of the Understanding with the Transcendental* concerns refection, i.e. being conscious of the type of relation connecting our representations to our faculties (*KrV*:B316/A260). When we judge, we must reflect on the concepts we use, recognising to what kind of cognitive faculty they belong.

Kant distinguishes between mere logical reflection—a comparison of concepts without regard to which faculty the representations to which they relate belong to—and transcendental reflection, which is a duty for anyone who wants to judge correctly:

> The action through which I make the comparison of representations in general with the cognitive power in which they are situated, and through which I distinguish whether they are to be compared to one another as belonging to the pure understanding or to pure intuition, I call transcendental reflection. The relation, however, in which the concepts in a state of mind can belong to each other are those of identity and difference, of agreement and opposition, of the inner and the outer, and finally of the determinable and the determination (matter and form). The correct determination of this relation depends on the cognitive power in which they subjectively belong to each other, whether in sensibility or in understanding. For the difference in the latter

[3] Another example of how Kant attributes a new meaning to a traditional notion is metaphysics. The term, which traditionally indicated the attempts to disclose features of the suprasensible, is used by Kant to address the systematic cognition from pure reason, which can be developed only after having developed a propaedeutic (the critique of pure reason) (*KrV*:A841/B869).

> makes a great difference in the way in which one ought to think of the former (*KrV*:A261/B317).

There is a fundamental difference—both ontologically and epistemically—depending on whether or not one reflects on the origin of representations. If, for example, the world is considered to be exclusively noumenal (*realitas noumenon*), then it is impossible for there to be an opposition between realities, i.e. a relation in which two realities cancel out their consequences, whereas this can happen in the phenomenal world: for example, if we consider forces or even an enjoyment that balances pain (*KrV*:A265/B321). Another example provided by Kant, opposing Leibniz, concerns the consideration of two drops of water: they could be indiscernible if they are not considered as appearances given at different moments of time or positions in space, i.e. as objects of the empirical use of the understanding, which is only meaningful in space and time (*KrV*:A263f/B319f).

This recognition and critical awareness of the origin, limits, and validity of the use of those concepts is the kern of Kant's theoretical relation to his tradition: he does not abandon the philosophical notions and contents of the past, but illuminates them from a new perspective, which allows him to do metaphysics without falling into amphiboly—the confusion of the pure objects of the understanding with appearances (*KrV*:A270/B326)—or into the misunderstandings caused by a lack of reflection. An example of this lack of reflection is provided by the metaphysicians' traditional use of the notion of God.

1.2. On God: between reason and history

Kant rejects the possibility of developing metaphysics as a science; what he establishes, however, is not the irrationality of belief in God *in toto*, but the irrationality of approaching the question of God as if it were an object of possible experience demonstrable by theoretical arguments, such as ontological, cosmological, and physico-theological proofs.

More specifically, according to the ontological argument—which also appears, "disguised", in the other arguments—God as the most real being must exist because, according to its definition, it must include all the predicates that contribute to its greatness; real existence is (supposedly)

one of these predicates and, therefore, God must exist.[4] Kant's most famous objection to this argument[5] stresses that it is not legitimate to move from the definition of the idea of God—*ens realissimum*—to the demonstration of his existence. There is a semantic distinction between logical predicates and real (i.e. relative to experience) predicates: as seen in the amphiboly, they involve two different ontological levels or classes, and it is therefore illegitimate to derive the latter from the former. That is why the verb "to be" is not to be considered as a predicate contained in a concept and made explicit, but as a position within a judgement (*KrV*:A598/B626).[6]

Now, the impossibility to demonstrate God as an object of possible experience (*KrV*:A641/B669-A642/B670) does not imply that this notion is useless, as it can already be seen in the first *Critique* in the physico-theological argument—"the oldest, clearest and the most appropriate to common human reason" (*KrV*:A623/B652). This version of such a "design argument" establishes the usefulness of thinking of the architect of the world (*KrV*:A624/B652): thinking of an author of nature is useful for cognition insofar as it is intended to be a regulative idea and prepares the ground for a possible moral teleology, which will be further developed in the third *Critique* (5:443).

Kant confronts the traditional philosophical notion of God from a novel and critical perspective by considering God not as an object of thought that must have some correspondence in experience, but rather as an idea. Ideas, for Kant, are inevitable: like optical illusion, we have

[4] When we move from the consideration of the world and the thought its design to claim the existence of a supreme, infinite cause, we call for a being the essence and existence of which cannot be separated. In this way, we repeat the mistake at the basis of the ontological (synthetic) argument.

[5] He formulated four criticisms: the first two, which consider the statement "God exists" as an analytic judgment (*KrV*:A594/B622–A597/B625), have been rejected by some interpreters (Plantinga, 1966) because Kant did not touch upon Anselm's version of the argument, which is not merely analytic. The other two criticisms, which deal with the ontological argument as a synthetic one (*KrV*:A597/B625–A602/B630), are grounded in the distinction between the domain of possible experience and the domain of mere thinking.

[6] God is posited as the subject of a judgement without implying his existence within possible experience. There is no difference, for instance, between a thousand euros in existence and the concept of a thousand euros—their existence adds nothing to the concept of a sum of money (*KrV*:A599/B627).

a natural tendency to think of them even when we recognise their groundlessness and deceptive character. But if this tendency is natural, there must be a right use of ideas:

> Everything grounded in the nature of our powers must be purposive and consistent with their correct use if only we can guard against a certain misunderstanding and find out their proper direction. Thus the transcendental ideas too will presumably have a good and consequently immanent use, even though, if their significance is misunderstood and they are taken for concepts of real things, they can be transcendent in their application and for that very reason deceptive (*KrV*:A642/B670-A643/B671).

For Kant, the object of reason is the understanding; while the understanding unites empirical multiplicity through concepts, reason unites the multiplicity of concepts through ideas by positing unity as the end of the understanding (*KrV*:A644/B672). Consequently, ideas are not constitutive[7] of objects, but they are useful for directing understanding towards the greatest unity:

> […] they have an excellent and indispensably necessary regulative use, namely that of directing the understanding to a certain goal respecting which the lines of direction of all its rules converge at one point,

[7] Scholars are still discussing whether regulative principles are to be considered as necessary transcendental conditions or only heuristic tools: "where the understanding alone does not attain to rules, [reason steps in] to help it through ideas" (*KrV*:A648/B676). The supporters of the first interpretation (Allison, 2000; Brandt, 1989; Grier, 1997) believe that even though there are differences between the appendix to the first *Critique* and the third *Critique*, in both texts Kant maintains that regulative principles have a transcendental role because they secure coherency and connection to the empirical claims regarding objects falling under the *a priori* forms. Therefore, regulative principles are needed—and not just only *a priori* forms of intuition and pure concepts—because without them there could be no cognisable order at the empirical level. The second group of interpreters (Guyer, 1997; Horstmann, 1989; Makkreel, 2006; Tuschling, 1992) stress that, in the first *Critique*, Kant refers to the utility (*KrV*:A661/B689 & A663/B691) of regulative principles without ascribing them a transcendental value (that will be assigned to them only in the third *Critique*).

> which, although it is only an idea (*focus imaginarius*)—i.e., a point from which the concepts of the understanding do not really proceed, since it lies entirely outside the bounds of possible experience—nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension (*KrV*:A644/B673).

Thus, the idea of God has the heuristic function of orienting empirical research as if there existed unity in nature (*KrV*:A670/B698-A671/B699). As the object of an idea, God is assumed not absolutely (*suppositio absoluta*) but rather relatively and in relation to the sensible world—as a way for the understanding to systematise its contents:

Now I can nevertheless assume such an incomprehensible being, the object of a mere idea, relative to the world of sense, though not in itself. For if the greatest possible empirical use of my reason is grounded on an idea (that of systematic complete unity, about which I will have more to say presently), which in itself can never be presented adequately in experience, even though it is unavoidably necessary for approximating to the highest possible degree of empirical unity, then I am not only warranted but even compelled to realize this idea, i.e., to posit for it an actual object but only as a Something in general with which I am not acquainted at all and to which, as a ground of that systematic unity and in relation to that, I give such properties as are analogous to the concepts of the understanding in their empirical use (*KrV*:A677/B705).

Besides, God is also introduced by Kant as a postulate of practical reason. In the "Canon" of the first *Critique*, Kant asserts that for the highest good to be obtained, we must think about a being capable of arranging reality in such a way that there exists a perfect balance between ethical worth and happiness (*KrV*:A816/B845-A819/B847). As it is further detailed in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, to be consistent with the assumptions of practical reason (5:124), God has to be conceived as a postulate to think coherently about the realizability of the highest good (the proportionate distribution of happiness according to morality).

Now, there is a tension[8] between, on the one hand, the autonomy of ethics from faith, and, on the other hand, the claim—present in the *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (6:6)—that ethics inevitably

[8] As shown in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, there is no need for an incentive—other than reason itself—to determine the will according to the moral

leads to religion. Kant is aware of this and begins the *Religion* with a defence of the highest good, which stresses an aspect of the argument in favour of regarding God as a postulate (less prominent in the second *Critique*), namely, the reference to an end: "in the absence of all reference to an end no determination of the will can take place in human beings at all" (6:4). Even if the determination of the will must be grounded solely in the moral Law,[9] ends need to be represented because human decision-making is end oriented. It is "one of the inescapable limitations of human beings and of their practical faculty of reason […] to be concerned in every action with its results" (6:7n). The commitment to pursue an end—which must be regarded as realisable and as part of a system of ends ordered by the reference to a supreme end (the highest good)—implies the commitment to the realisability of the supreme end. This argument explains Kant's claim that morality inevitably leads to religion (6:6): we need to believe that our actions will somehow have a good impact on the world, i.e. we need a source of hope.[10]

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law (5:59). At the same time, a wise creator is postulated because of the highest good (*KrV*:A818/B846–A819/B847).

[9] As Kant puts it: "Hence on its own behalf morality in no way needs religion (whether objectively, as regards willing, or subjectively, as regards capability) but is rather self-sufficient by virtue of pure practical reason" (6:4).

[10] Kant provides an example of this need by considering the case of the righteous atheist in the third *Critique*: "We can thus assume a righteous man (like Spinoza) who takes himself to be firmly convinced that there is no God and (since with regard to the object of morality it has a similar consequence) there is also no future life: how would he judge his own inner purposive determination by the moral law, which he actively honours? He does not demand any advantage for himself from his conformity to this law, whether in this or in another world; rather, he would merely unselfishly establish the good to which that holy law directs all his powers. But his effort is limited; and from nature he can, to be sure, expect some contingent assistance here and there, but never a lawlike agreement in accordance with constant rules (like his internal maxims are and must be) with the ends to act in behalf of which he still feels himself bound and impelled. Deceit, violence, and envy will always surround him, even though he is himself honest, peaceable, and benevolent; and the righteous ones besides himself that he will still encounter will, in spite of all their worthiness to be happy, nevertheless be subject by nature, which pays no attention to that, to all the evils of poverty, illnesses, and untimely death, just like all the other animals on earth, and will always remain thus until one wide grave engulfs them all together (whether honest or dishonest, it makes no difference here) and flings them, who were

But what does this idea of God have in common with the biblical one? What is Kant's stand regrding the traditional conceptions of God?

Looking at the division of the *Religion* and its content, it is clear that Kant ascribes a new meaning to traditional doctrines and notions. The book is divided into four parts, each dealing with fundamental questions of Christian doctrine. In the first part, Kant examines the doctrine of original sin to determine whether there is any overlap between this historical doctrine and pure rational religion. Interestingly, Kant's notion of evil concerns not only the individual dimension as the religious tradition has it, but also the social dimension: we "mutually corrupt each other's moral dispositions and make one another evil" (6:94). To avoid such mutual "social" corruption, there is a need for a universal Church conceived as an ethical community. The second part of the work deals with Christology with special reference to the doctrines of grace and incarnation (6:60-66). The third part looks at religion from a historical point of view, emphasizing the need for the establishment of a universal church aimed at fostering social relationships among people cooperating towards "a common end, namely the promotion of the highest good" (6:97). This community—a "cosmopolitan moral community" (6:194-200)—can be seen as an ideal situation that reflects the realization of the highest good. The last part of the work focuses on ecclesiology and determines the distinction between natural Christian religion and a learned one in Kant's own terms: the former is rooted in reason and therefore "comprehensibly and convincingly" communicable to all human beings "through their own reason" (6:162)

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capable of having believed themselves to be the final end of creation, back into the abyss of the purposeless chaos of matter from which they were drawn. — The end, therefore, which this well-intentioned person had and should have had before his eyes in his conformity to the moral law, he would certainly have to give up as impossible; or, if he would remain attached to the appeal of his moral inner vocation and not weaken the respect, by which the moral law immediately influences him to obedience, by the nullity of the only idealistic final end that is adequate to its high demand (which cannot occur without damage to the moral disposition), then he must assume the existence of a moral author of the world, i.e., of God, from a practical point of view, i.e., in order to form a concept of at least the possibility of the final end that is prescribed to him by morality—which he very well can do, since it is at least not self-contradictory" (5:452-453). This practical need to assume God to regard the realisation of the highest good as possible will also be central in the preface to the *Religion* (6:7).

without the need for revelation, whilst the latter, represents "dogmas of faith" (6:163) and regards God's judgment as dependent on the external commitment to liturgical observances rather than on the disposition of the believer's heart.

Kant, confronted with his Christian tradition, distinguishes between two levels: one based on account of reason and its pure rational religion, and one embedded in a particular tradition. Starting from this separation (which he did not think was understandable for the general public),[11] he explores the possible relationship between historical faith and pure rational religion (6:9). On the one hand, he explains that *Religion* makes "no appraisal of Christianity" (7:8) and that natural or rational religion must distance itself from revealed religion. Indeed, the rational core of religion must be accessible to everyone through reason alone: "The only faith that can found a universal church is pure religious faith, for it is a plain rational faith which can be convincingly communicated to everyone, whereas a historical faith, merely based on facts, can extend its influence no further than the tidings relevant to a judgment on its credibility can reach" (6:103).

On the other hand, Kant rejects some dogmas insofar as they are contrary to the rational core of religion—for instance, the fall of man is only symbolic (6:49)—and thus suggests that historical faith should be judged on behalf of the authority of reason. One of the tasks of the *Religion* is to develop an experiment[12] to identify the overlap between the two

[11] See the *Conflicts of the Faculties*: "Again, as a teacher of the people—in my writings and particularly in my book *Religion within the Boundaries* etc.—I have not in any way offended against the highest paternal purpose, which I know: in other words, I have done no harm to the public religion of the land. This is already clear from the fact that the book in question is not at all suitable for the public: to them it is an unintelligible, closed book" (7:8).

[12] Kant calls it the second experiment/attempt (*Versuch*) without clarifying what the first one was. Some interpreters regard the first experiment as an attempt to find overlap between biblical theology and the pure rational system of religion (Hare, 1996; Reardon, 1988), and the second as an inquiry into how certain elements of the former might be translated in moral terms (Hare, 1996, p. 40). Others suggest that the first experiment pertains to the *Religion*'s "transcendental elements", while the second "aims at assessing one particular empirical religion", namely Christianity (Palmquist, 2000, p. 143), or consists of philosophical apologetics (Firestone & Jacobs, 2008). For Pasternack (2014, p. 79), the first attempt concerns the project of a pure rational system of reason,

spheres: the "wider sphere of faith" and the "narrower" sphere of the "pure religion of reason" (6:12). The parts of the historical teachings that do not coincide with their rational core are to be regarded as contingent. However, this does not mean that they are completely irrelevant. As Kant puts it: "what we have cause to believe on historical grounds […] that is, revelation, as contingent tenets of faith—it [reason] regards as nonessential. But this does not mean that reason considers it idle and superfluous" (7:9). Historical doctrines can still help "depending on the times and the person concerned—to satisfy a rational need" (7:9).[13] Thus, the contents of the outer sphere remain important—within their historical context—and can be accepted as part of religious practices; at this level, then, there seems to be room for pluralism, that is, for a plurality of culturally specific doctrines that can engage in dialogue with one another, provided they recognise their limited, context-specific character.

Kant's critical approach to tradition—in its various meanings—can be summarized as follows: first, the transmitted content of oral tradition must be regarded as unreliable and need to be subjected to further critical analysis; second, philosophical notions require reflection in order to avoid amphibolies and historical religion should be distinguished from its purely rational content, on the basis of which a dialogue between culture-specific doctrines seems possible. This enlightened, critical approach influenced Al-Jabri's relationship with *Turāth*.

2. *Turāth* and the *Critique of Arab Reason*

The title of al-Jabri's main work, *Critique of Arab Reason* (*Naqd al-ʿAql alʿArabī*)[14] echoes not only the title of Kant's masterpiece, but also

which is grounded in ethics and has a soteriological content, as opposed to the second—the only actual experiment presented in the work—which concerns the overlap between the two theologies.

[13] One could argue that there are problems that Kant opens up because of this rational need. For instance, there is no need to refer to God to justify ethical commands: duty is and should be sufficient, yet reason needs to find plausible answers to questions concerning, for example, the lack of justice, i.e. the lack of adequacy of moral worth and happiness in this world.

[14] As the editor of the English translation of *The Formation of Arab Reason* indicates: "The Arabic term *al-ʿaql* deriving from the trilateral root *ʿa-q-l*' can be translated into English in various ways, among others as: 'reason', 'mind', 'understanding', 'comprehension', 'intelligence', 'rationality', 'intellect', and

resembles it in its aim to analyse reason and its legitimate boundaries.[15] Al-Jabri's perspective, however, can be regarded as more "local", in that it does not aim at reason in general, conceived as a transcendental faculty, but rather focuses on the Arab historical specificity of the use of reason (or mind: *ʿaql* in Arabic) to understand Islamic thought from within and only then, eventually, identify a general, normative dimension of reason. Whereas Kant seeks to determine the limits of the possibility of cognition by distinguishing different domains and uses of reason, al-Jabri examines Arab reason (not pure reason):

> Yet, reason is universal and its principles are universal and necessary. This is true, however, only within a particular culture or within cultures of a similar pattern. As Lalande asserts, constituted reason "is in the category of the absolute for those who have not acquired, in the discipline of historians or the discipline of philosophers, the critical spirit", those restrained by the prevailing reason produced by the efficient reason of their ancestors, the reason of their culture that they consider to be the only unique and viable culture, or at least their own particular world of culture (al-Jabri, 2011, p. 9).

Intentionally or unintentionally, every human being carries the imprints of a cultural reality; therefore, al-Jabri (2011, pp. 8-9) distinguishes between constituent reason—the ability to speak (*al-*

'rational intellect'. Here, translating it as 'reason' was based on consultation with the author himself and his express preference in connection to an issue with the working title tentatively chosen for his book (*Takwīn al-ʿAql alʿArabī*) of 'Formation of Arab Reason'. In that discussion, al-Jabri referred to Emanuel Kant's usage of the term 'reason' (*die Vernunft*) and indicated that this was the intended connotation of the Arabic term (*al-ʿaql*)" (in al-Jabri, 2011, p. 31, n. 1).

[15] There are many books that adorn themselves with the title *Critique* after Immanuel Kant, but rarely is this presumption as justified as in this case. For Kant, philosophical critique means determining the limits of the legitimate use of reason in the production of knowledge with universal pretensions. Following this procedure, al-Jabri wants to show how Arab thinking has exceeded the limits of its legitimate claims, thus turning into a culture of "bad universalisms" (Grünenberg & Hegasy, 2009, p. 11).

quwwah al-nat iqah)—which distinguishes humans from animals, and constituted reason, which is culture-specific. For al-Jabri, Arab reason:

> […] is nothing other than this 'thought' (*fikr*) […] created by a particular culture that has its own specificities, in this case, Arab culture itself, a common culture that carries with it the history of Arab civilisation and reflects Arabs' reality or conveys it as well as their aspirations for the future just as it carries, reflects and expresses, at the same time, impediments to their progress and causes of their current state of underdevelopment (*takhallufihim*) (2011, p. 6).

In addition to Arab reason, al-Jabri refers to two other kinds of reason—Greek and European—because only they, along with the Arabs, were able to ground knowledge on reason itself and not on myths: "three civilisations—Greek, Arab and modern European—have, exclusively, produced not only knowledge, but also theories of knowledge, and they alone—as far as we know—not only engaged in thinking by means of reason but also engaged in thinking about reason" (al-Jabri, 2011, p. 11).

More precisely, the Greco-Roman paradigm considered reason sufficient to interpret nature, with which it was directly connected. As for European reason, in the Middle Ages, God is considered as a force connected to nature or as a power that guarantees the correspondence between the principles of mind and nature; in modern times, on the other hand, the concept of God is set aside (which does not mean that it is rejected) and gives way to a kind of epistemological faith and trust in reason as sufficient to interpret nature (cfr. al-Jabri, 2011, p. 23). Moreover, for al-Jabri (2011, pp. 24ff), the primary object of European reason is nature, whereas in the Arab system of rationality the main object is God. Arab reason does not primarily seek the means to inquire about nature itself but rather about its ethical order:

> Arab reason is governed by the normative evaluative perception of things. What we mean by the normative evaluative perception is this orientation of the thinking, to tend to seek a place for things, and their position in the order of ethical values which is considered a referential criterion and basis for this thinking (al-Jabri, 2011, p. 28).

Unlike Kant's, the aim of al-Jabri's inquiry into the genealogy of Arab reason and its main categories (*Bayan*, *Irfan*, *Burhan*) is to provide an answer to a specific social, political, and historical question: "How can contemporary Arab thought retrieve and absorb the most rational and critical dimensions of its tradition and employ them in the same rationalist direction as before—the direction of fighting against feudalism, Gnosticism, and dependency?" (al-Jabri, 1993, p. 53). His answer consists in attaining a new *Naḥda* (enlightenment, awakening) by shedding light upon the roots of Arab intellectual history through a critical approach freed from the alienation and idealisation of an absolute perfect past (see Hegasy, 2018, p. 187). Differently from intellectuals such as Abdallah Laroui (1978), al-Jabri neither rejects Islam nor does he propose to imitate the European value system; rather, he argues for a scientific reading (al-Jabri, 1994, p. 40) to reconstruct the foundations of Arab reason and asks about *Turāth*, i.e. the Arab *Weltanschauung* that encompasses the main religious, legal, and social values that constitute Arab self-consciousness. Within his perspective, *Turāth*[16] contains concepts borrowed from Persian and Sufi traditions and of which one must be aware in order to prepare for the path of *Naḥda* (I will discuss this later in the text). This project of awareness of one's tradition, then, had a clear emancipatory vocation aimed at transforming postcolonial Morocco, where the cultural currents of Arab thought were flourishing.[17]

[16] As Daifallah puts it: "[Al Jabri] defines *Turath* as 'the epistemological and ideological entailments, and the rational basis and the affective charge, of Arab Islamic culture [as it is experienced in the present]'. Expressed more simply, [he] explains that Turath cannot be properly understood if it is considered as the remnants of a cultural past in the present, or a 'heritage' in the traditional sense; rather, it should be understood as the continued and 'living presence' of that past in the 'consciousness (*waii*) and inner worlds (*wufus*)' of the present-day Arabs. Accordingly, the contemporary Arab does not consider Turath to be the history of his culture, but the kernel and completed form of that culture; for him 'it is theology and law, Shari'a language and literature, reason and mentality, nostalgia and future outlook'. For the contemporary 'Arab self' or al-dhat al 'arabiyya, Turath is a lived tradition that shapes the way that subject knows the world, understands its present condition, constructs its past, and conceives of its future possibilities […]. *Turath* [is considered] a lived tradition invested with ideological and emotional charge" (Daifallah, 2012, pp. 88-89).

[17] Think of the works of Fatima Mernissi, Taha Abderrahmane, Bensalem Himmich, Mohammed Aziz Lahbabi, Ali Oumlil, and Mohammed Allal

From a methodological point of view, the reader should adopt a method of separation and reconnection when approaching texts of the *Turāth* (al-Jabri, 1994, p. 47), that is, she should separate herself from her own beliefs and prejudices when approaching the text and reflect on it by placing it in its context and developing an autonomous critical judgement (*al-ijtihād*). In this way Arabs might succeed in regaining their autonomy:

> If the Arabs—set free by Kant—want to find the exit from their self-inflicted historical immaturity and take "their own history" into their own hands again, then they must grant the readers of sacred and profane texts their own political power of judgement and encourage the students to make use of it (Grünenberg & Hegasy, 2009, p. 19; my translation).

2.1. Ethical traditions

Al-Jabri claims that the cause of the lack of enlightenment in the modern Arab world are epistemological and ethical reasons that lie in the prevailing values of *Turāth*. During the 7th century A.D., internal wars shook the Arabic world and its five main traditions, each of which promoted different central values: the Greek, the Persian, the pre-Islamic Arab, the Islamic, and the Sufi.

Greek ethics had happiness as its central value: al-Jabri considered Galen as a pioneer of the so-called "medical trend", which emerged in Arabic philosophy after the 9th century and the main representatives of which were Ibn al-Haytham and Abū Bakr al-Rāzī. According to Ibn al-Haytham, there are no differences among ethical subjects, all of whom strive for human perfection. The ruler— unlike the Persian paradigm, as we will see—must fulfil their responsibilities with care and affection, not authoritarianism (al-Jabri, 2006, p. 344). In addition, Rāzī, considered one of the greatest Platonists in Islam, proposed six ethical principles to heal the soul.[18]

Sinaceur.

[18] They can be summarised as follows: 1) after death, we shall reach an admirable or reprehensible state according to our conduct in life; 2) the supreme end for which we were created is the acquisition of knowledge and the practice of justice; 3) the intellect guides us to eschew immediate pleasures; 4) our master

Regarding pre-Islamic Arab traditions (*jahilyya*), al-Jabri notes that while it is difficult to draw a clear cut between pre-Islamic values and Islamic ones—because many values and practices have been adopted and incorporated by Islam—one of the values that can be traced back to pre-Islamic times[19] is *Murū'a*, defined as "an intersection of high morals that one achieves through making efforts and standing the hardships. It gives one respect and high esteem among his kinds and makes of one an idol whose word is heard which in turn provides him a moral power or *Su'adad*" (al-Jabri, 2006, p. 531). *Su'adad* can be achieved, for instance, by being an honourable tribal leader: it is not a social or political value *per se* but a moral one, needed in stateless societies. *Murū'a*—which derives from *mar'*, "man"— can be understood as a synonym for responsibility and describes the ethical state of someone who aims to benefit the community without demanding anything in return.[20]

Unlike the Greek and pre-Islamic traditions, the Persian one focused on obedience: this influence harmed the modernisation process of most Arab-Islamic states by justifying authoritarianism. Indeed, the Umayyad rulers, disseminated values imported from the Persian ethical system through the use of *Khataba* ("eloquent speech") and *Tarassul*—public letters read out in mosques to convey obedience to the new class system (see al-Jabri, 2006, p. 249). These values included the idea of predestination and *Khilafa*, which means viceregency and was understood as the responsibility God gave to mankind: the ability to carry out God's commandments (Khirallah, 2020, pp. 75f). The *Jabryya* creed, for instance, regarded the head of the state as the only one who possesses *Khilafa*, thus claiming that he alone represents God on earth, which is another justification for the establishment of authoritarianism.

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looks over us and does not want us to be a cause of pain—those who inflict pain will be punished accordingly; 5) we must not suffer pain when it exceeds pleasure; 6) the creator has given us all that we need and on which the world itself depends (agriculture, etc.) See Druart (1997, p. 67).

[19] The pre-existence of *Mur'a* can be demonstrated by accounts of situations that Mohammad and his followers had to face, in which *Mur'a* was regarded as an ethical value distinguished from religion. For instance, Omar Ibn al-Khattab—the second caliph and a fellow of Mohammad—claimed that while generosity comes from a man's faith, his *Mur'a* depends on his good morality (Youssef, 1999, p. 100)

[20] *Mur'a*, then, indicates humanity in the sense of "virtuous humanity" (al-No'man, 2008, p. 201).

The strictly Islamic tradition is concerned with the ethical code derived from the Qur'ān and focuses on good deeds. After the prophet's death, his followers faced a political and moral crisis; in this context, theological schools emerged to deal with the crisis. One such school was the *Muʿtazila*, which focused on human action and employed metaphysics and *Kalām* to solve ethical dilemmas. Unlike other schools—such as the *Murji'ah*, which believed that God alone can judge who is in the wrong and who is in the right and that actions are not decisive in that judgement—they regarded people engaged in internal wars as venial sinners[21] who must dwell in fire in the afterlife. Moreover, the *Muʿtazila* differed from *Jabriyya*: while *Jabriyya* regarded the belief in predestination[22] as a way of asserting that the Imam is not responsible for his actions, the *Muʿtazila* rejected predestination and emphasized the capacity to choose freely. They supported their claims through verses from the Qu'ran on free will, such as: "So, whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it" (*Surah Az-zalzalah*) and "Certainly, you are countable for what you do" (*Surah An-nahl* 93). An intermediate position between *Jabriyya* and *Muʿtazila* is the one of the *Ashʿaryya*, who use the theory of *Kasb* ("to perform") to solve the dilemma of the contrast between predestination and free will. According to this theory, agents are responsible for the actions they perform even if those actions have been created for the agents by God. Al-Baqalani tried to explain this theory by stating that God created possibilities (e.g. killing) and *Kasb* takes place when these possibilities are performed. Humans, therefore, are not responsible for the existence of these possibilities but will be judged for the *Kasb*. However, for al-Jabri, this position makes it difficult to justify free choice, since, given God's omnipotence, one would have to admit that God also determines *Kasb*.

The last tradition that influenced Arab culture is Persian Sufism, which advocates *fanā'*—the annihilation of the self—as its main value.

[21] The distinction between believers, non-believers, and venial sinners (*Fasiq*) was first made by the *Muʿtazila* Wassil Ibn ' Atta.

[22] To support their statements, they emphasise those verses of the Qu'rān praising God's omnipotence and his role as Master who wills everything on earth and in heaven. For instance: "To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is within them, and He is over all things competent" (*Surah Al-Ma'idah* 120).

Al-Jabri considers that the concept of *fanā'* contrasts with monotheism insofar as, by achieving it through ascetic practices, the apprentice (*Mureed*, "the seeker") is led to unity with God, thus contradicting Islam (al-Jabri, 2001, p. 429). Moreover, for al-Jabri, Sufism harmed Islamic society not only because it induced its followers to isolate themselves—not to participate in social practices (work, raising children), thus weakening the state—but also because it promoted blind obedience to the Master (*Sheikh*). As the 12th century Sufi al-Suhawardi stated, the disciple must renounce his own will and submit himself to the master (see Keller, 1996, pp. 88f).

For al-Jabri, the main reason why Arab political and ethical systems could not advance is due to the crisis of values that occurred during the internal wars (*Fitna*) after Mohammad's death, which led to the adoption of the Persian ethical system and Sufism, which considered obedience as their main value. Obedience seemed to provide a solution to avoid future wars, which lead, however, not only to the abandonment of ethical theories based on responsibility—such as that of *Muʿtazila*—but also, on a political level, to the establishment of tyranny and the breakdown of a pure tribal system based on egalitarianism.

2.2. Traditional epistemic paradigms

Al-Jabri made a critique of *Turāth* not only in ethics but also in epistemology, identifying three main intellectual paradigms characterising Arab reason: *Bayan* ("indication"), *Irfān* ("illumination") and *Burhān* ("demonstration").

Bayan means discernment in *Fiqh* ("jurisprudence"), *Kalam* ("theological discourse"), and *Nahw* ("grammar"): widely used in works of Sufism and Batinism, it is characterised by the use of analogies and arises as a dialectical result of rational and irrational elements. The rational elements are those which concern Qur'anic theological discourse (al-Jabri, 2011, p. 161) and defend monotheism, which, uniquely, respects the principle of non-contradiction (al-Jabri, 2011, p. 162). In contrast, irrational tendencies can be identified with all those beliefs that challenge the monotheistic content of the Qur'ān, for instance, Manichaeism, Sabianism—which holds Hermetic views on indescribable divinity and its "intermediaries," to which creation belongs—and the Neoplatonist and Hermetic theologies (spuriously attributed to the Seven Sages).

Irfān is the mystical and a-rational moment, exemplified by Sufism and Isma'ili philosophy (al-Jabri 2011, p. 260): it characterises the attitude

called "resigned reason" (*al-ʿaql al-mustaqil*), which is incapable of attaining the knowledge of God through contemplation of the universe and can only know nature through direct communion with God (al-Jabri, 2011, p. 192).

Unlike *Irfān*, *Burhān* makes use of demonstrative and critical reasoning and is typical of the works of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sinā. According to al-Jabri, it first emerged in al-Maʾmūn's political dream[23] (7th caliph of the Abbasid Caliphate) and was developed as a political weapon by al-Kindī and al-Fārābī. At that time, in which there was an indissoluble connection between politics, religion, and philosophy, al-Maʾmūn wanted to use Aristotle's logic to confront Gnostic Manicheism and Shiite illuminationists, who opposed his Abbaside state. Al-Kindī followed the same path: he opposed Manicheism and Hermetism and spread scientific knowledge through rational arguments under the influence of Greek philosophy. At the time of the disintegration of the Islamic Empire, al-Fārābī developed a philosophical system of demonstration combining religion, metaphysics, and politics. He was guided by his confidence in the power of reason, which "cannot err […] [;] it is trustworthy and certain" (al-Fārābī, 1971, pp. 50f). According to al-Fārābī, reason does not require an origin to be conferred on it

[23] As Ibn al-Nadim wrote in the *Fihrist* (*The Index*): "One of the reasons for this is that the caliph al-Maʾmūn saw in his dream a white man, a red beard, a broad forehead and conjoined eyebrows, who was bald-headed, with light coloured eyes and pleasing of countenance, sitting on the edge of his bed, of whom al-Maʾmūn said: it was as though I were before him and he was possessed of an aura of veneration. I asked: 'Who are you?' He replied: 'I am Aristotle.' I was pleased and said: 'O sage I would like to enquire of you.' He responded: 'Ask.' I enquired: 'What is good?' He replied: 'What is good according to reason (*fi al-ʿaql*)'. I said: 'Then what?' He said: 'What is good according to law.' I persisted: 'Then what?' He responded: 'What is good according to the masses (*al-jumhur*).' I asked: 'Then what?' He said: 'There is nothing thereafter.' … and this dream was the most certain reason for producing books. Thus, there was correspondence between al-Maʾmūn and the ruler of Rome, and al-Maʾmūn sought his assistance, writing to the king of Rome and asking him permission to preserve what he had with him of select ancient knowledge accumulated and kept in the land of Rome, and he agreed after having initially abstained" (Ibn al-Nadīm, 1872, p. 243, as cited and translated in al-Jabri, 2011, p. 271).

from "the outside"; rather, it is self-sufficient,[24] because the "primary axioms"—the conceptual principles of reasoning (such as causality and identity)—can be acquired naturally.

But it is in Ibn Rushd that al-Jabri finds the best example of a critical, enlightened philosopher. Commissioned by the Almohad caliph al-Mansur[25] to interpret and paraphrase Aristotle, Ibn Rushd decided to inquire into the problematic relationship between philosophy and religion. He came to the conclusion that each has its own principles and methods, although both aspire to inspire virtue:

> The discourse of Ibn Rushd is entirely based on regarding religion and philosophy as independent structures where one must seek the truthfulness in them intrinsically and not extrinsically. And the required truthfulness is the truthfulness of demonstration, inference through evidence, and not the truthfulness of premises. As the premises in religious matters, as well as in philosophy, are positivist fundamentals which ought to be adopted without evidence. Consequently Averroes asks: 'If the arts of deriving inferential evidence contain in their principles restrictions and positivist fundamentals, so how proper would it be if such exist in the laws derived from the Revelation and reason?' And, therefore 'the sage philosophers ought not debate and engage in discourse on the principles of the laws. This is because every art has its own principles, and it is a duty for he who is concerned with any given art to recognize its principles and not contradict them through denial or invalidation; thus, the art of legal practice ought to be as such.' (Averroes, JM) As the philosopher ought not [to] contradict the fundamentals

[24] Al-Jabri remarks, however, that some elements of Hermeticism were still present, as it can be seen in the claim that there is a sort of vertical/pyramidal intercommunication of beings from the First Cause to the elements (al-Jabri, 2011, pp. 307f).

[25] The Almohad caliphs in al-Andalus and Maghreb saw in Aristotle's thought the best ideological instrument to challenge the Fatimid and the Abbasid caliphs, thus exemplifying how philosophical thought had a fundamental political significance.

> and principles upon which religion is based because they are fixed already, similarly the cleric ought not [to] contradict philosophical issues unless acquiring their fundamentals and principles (al-Jabri, 2011, p. 397).

Here we can see the main difference between Ibn Rushd and Kant with respect to revelation: even if Ibn Rushd wants to include reason in religion, this inclusion cannot violate the laws of *shari'ah*, which are deduced from revelation, while, in Kant, it is the rational core that must judge the validity of revelation. In the *Definitive Statement: Determining the Relationship between Divine Law and Human Wisdom* (1999), Ibn Rushd distinguishes between anti-Islamic philosophy, which he did not recognize as licit, and legitimate philosophy, which increases our knowledge of God. Philosophy and law cannot be opposed to each other: any clash between them is apparent and will disappear after a proper analysis of the cause of the problem. Interpretation is Ibn Rushd's way of resolving the contrast between revelation and reason, and for him, the mistake made by many of his predecessors—including Avicenna—was that they failed to distinguish between the different uses of reason and domains of knowledge: they misused analogy and equated two heterogeneous worlds (the visible and the invisible) instead of limiting its use to cases in which the nature of the known term and that of the unknown term are of the same kind. The science of God is beyond human reason, a-rational from a philosophical human perspective (al-Jabri, 1999, p. 99).

Although their principles are different, religion and philosophy share an ethical task, which—as in Kant—is recognised as the primary, universal interest of reason. For al-Jabri (interpreting Ibn Rushd), it is possible to identify a rational, universal core in every historical product of a scientific effort:

> Well aware of the universality and historicity of knowledge, Averroes set out to define the way to act when addressing the "sciences of the ancient ones", which at that time represented science per excellence. This method is worthy of serving as a model. We can reinvest it to define our relationship to tradition and to universal contemporary thought, knowing how to recognize what is universal in both—and that it is possible for us to reinvest in order to re-establish

> our specificity—and what is particular, what is circumstantial to an era or to a people, which we must know to enrich our experience and our vision of the world (al-Jabri, 1999, p. 128).

A scientific, distanced reading of the tradition (al-Jabri, 1994, p. 40) and an autonomous exercise of judgement in line with Ibn Rushd's thought are the tools of Arab reason to overcome hermetic and irrational views: this line represents an epistemological break with the Arab mystical thought, thus embodying a revolutionary phase in the history of Arab reason.

Conclusion: tradition, identity and modernity

A reflection on the relevance of tradition in Kant and al-Jabri cannot but involve considerations of the role of philosophy in debates about the modernisation of Islam (but not only) and questions such as: what is the relationship between modernity and tradition? Does modernisation imply the adoption of an external norm which threatens cultural identity? Are modernity and democracy compatible with Islam? Is modernity necessarily secular?

Traditionally, Muslims understand Islam as a human condition contrary to ignorance: Islam rescues humanity from ignorance, thus bringing a kind of enlightenment. The Qur'ān is described as the bearer of truth and as *Furqan*: "Blessed is He Who hath revealed unto His slave the Criterion [*Furqan*] (of right and wrong), that he may be a warner to the peoples" (25.1). If this is so, then to understand the Qur'ān means having the capacity to distinguish right from wrong. However, independent thinking and comparison between Islamic and modern European cultures is often seen as dangerous to the tradition. Nevertheless, there are instances in which Muslims looked at other, non-Muslim societies with some admiration:

> The great Islamic scholar of the 19th century, Muhammad Abdo wrote, after his return from France in 1888, that "I went to the West and saw Islam, but no Muslims; I got back to the East and saw Muslims, but not Islam." Most of the core values of Western countries, such as freedom, human rights, and justice, are universal and does [*sic*] not conflict with Islam or

> any religion, even yet they are important constituents of Islamic teachings (Hasan, 2011, p. 2).

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw several impulses towards modernisation; one of the leading figures was Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), who, after spending five years in Paris, played an important role in the effort to modernise Egypt, insisting that Western modernity was not incompatible with the values of Islam. He is considered the pioneering figure of the Nahda cultural movement—the Arab Renaissance or Enlightenment—which flourished mainly in Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. But not everyone was in favour of the compatibility of Islam and modernity. The main positions in this debate were: 1) the Westernised discourse, according to which the only way to realise modernity is to replace traditional ways with Western ones, and 2) authentic discourse, which can be divided into 2.1) authentic Islamic discourse, which proposes a strong commitment to traditional values, and b) authentic modernised discourse, which rejects the intellectual authority of the West and, at the same time, any religious dogma, focusing on a re-evaluation of elements already present in Arab-Islamic culture (al-Tamamy, 2014, p. 6). The latter approach is well exemplified by al-Jabri's Averroism and Abdolkarim Soroush's Neo-Mutazilsm.[26] For al-Jabri, as mentioned, Arab thought must free itself from the elements—mostly inherited from Persian thought—that brought passivity, docility, and irrationality to Islamic culture. To this end, he aspires to achieve a new rationalism, capable of laying the foundations for a state of justice, democracy, and rights—a state aware that a modern Arab "utopia" can

[26] He calls for a revival of philosophical and theological dialogue and considered that religion should be recognised as pluralist, reasoned religion. As he puts it: "By lighting the flame of reason, theologians rescue believers from the chilling aridity of mindless dogmas and contribute to the warmth of wisdom. Theological religion is a hundred times better and sweeter than common, emulative religiosity, and it nurtures within it a plurality of which there is neither sight nor sound in the parched desert of common religiosity. This is a plurality that is built on doubt, not certitude, and it is a pluralism that is negative, not positive" (Soroush, 2009, 150). Another example was the Sudanese scholar and reformer Ustadh Mahmoud Mohmed Taha who developed what he called the "Second Message of Allah", according to which the verses revealed in Medina were appropriate in their time only while the verses revealed in Mecca represented the ideal religion.

only be realised through the recognition that divine law is a law for human beings and must be interpreted and adapted to circumstances. Only through this awareness can Islam open a path towards modernity:

> Since the modern Arab Awakening, which soon swept across the entire Muslim world, with the efforts of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897CE) and Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905CE), the Muslim masses have used the slogan of 'application of Islamic shariah' to propound to the masses, the alternative which they hoped would take them to the enjoyment of a free and honourable life. Every member of the Muslim masses, all over the world, aspires to the day when Islamic shariah will be applied in a manner that can remove political and social injustice, realize freedom and dignity for the human being […]. The Muslim ummah, and many Muslim intellectuals, have consciously realized that the ideal Islamic life cannot be achieved except under exceptional situations, and probably not before the end of human life on earth […] [;] the realization of the Islamic Utopia, will remain relative in worldly time […]. I believe this is the idea which guided the people of authority in Islam, since the time of the Prophet, whether they were caliphs, kings, jurisprudents or any other personage who had a say in the application of *al-shariah*. I am also of the opinion that they all believed that applying the divine shariah by humans over humans, who are inherently imperfect, cannot be done except in a relative manner (al-Jabri, 2009, p. 94).

This approach to modernity is heir to Kant's critical methods in several respects, such as: the awareness that the realization of a utopia is a task yet to be accomplished, a kind of regulative idea guiding political and social practices; the relativity of the application of the law: even if *al-shariah* is considered to be of divine origin, its application is human, i.e. imperfect, and must be adapted to the circumstances. Al-Jabri's approach is undoubtedly more historic-political in orientation than Kant's, as he reflects on the historical emergence and success of certain rational paradigms and ethical values that influenced the Arab *Weltanschauung* rather than focusing on theoretical questions concerning, for instance,

the validity of metaphysics. But even so, al-Jabri's deepest yearning is very close to Kant's: both are dissatisfied with the inheritance of terms and theories in which the legitimate use of reason is often not inquired into at all. Tradition must be confronted and freed from prejudices, seeking reasons and investigating the origin and uses of its concepts: a novel reading of tradition "will help transform Arabs from humans who belong to heritage to humans who have heritage" (al-Jabri, 2006, pp. 24-25). But critically analysing tradition does not imply that the past cannot help chart the path to the future. As mentioned above, Jabri considered Ibn Rushd as the best example of an intellectual capable of developing a philosophical thought independent of the state and critical of his society, in particular the situation of women and the political regime—he is perhaps the first philosopher in Islam to criticise tyranny in clear words (al-Jabri, 2001, p. 292). For al-Jabri, Averroes' thought is the premise for the revival and modernisation of Islamic culture and society through its own internal resources,[27] which implies that a modernisation of Islam can occur without having to adopt external standards. This undoubtedly means having to confront and eventually criticise a cultural heritage that must be seen as such, i.e. as an inheritance and not as an eternal law that cannot be changed. But the condition for moving on, for al-Jabri, is the critical analysis of the history of Arab reason: just as Kant, well aware of his philosophical heritage, could criticise it, so can al-Jabri, in writing a history of Arab reason, identify the errors and virtues of past uses of reason. This self-awareness of the tradition can allow us to move forward from within without losing our heritage, but rather illuminating it.

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[27] This is the reason why from 1999 onwards Al-Jabri led a project of translation and interpretation of Averroes' works.

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