

Preface / Vorwort

Bülent Ucar and Mohammed Nekroumi*

Dear readers,

We are delighted to be able to present the second special thematic issue of *Hikma*, this time based on a collaboration between the chairs of Prof. Dr. Bülent Ucar (Osnabrück) and Prof. Dr. Mohammed Nekroumi (Erlangen). The issue features a series of important contributions examining reform ideas and approaches in relation to theological and socially-relevant questions. Prof. Dr. Mohammed Nekroumi himself ushers us into this thematic with his essay “*Renewal Efforts and Reform Thinking in Islam (...)*”, an attempt to plot and order the Muslim reform discourse. Drawing on concepts well-established in Muslim reform debates, for instance *tağdīd* and *işlāh*, Nekroumi discerns various stances and attitudes towards Islamic tradition and modernity amongst the numerous approaches since the nineteenth century that have laid claim to the terms “reform” or “renewal”. He warns of succumbing to the apologetic charm of many Islamic renewal movements. In his view these were neither immune against political instrumentalization and radicalization tendencies, nor were they able to effectively oppose the intellectually blunted “popular Islam”, which he understands as, along with Sufistic currents, including sections of the orthodox mainstream. Borrowing from the Moroccan philosopher al-Ġābirī and Islamic (forward) thinkers like al-Ġazālī and Ibn Rušd, he proposes an intellectual renaissance, one that does not follow the West’s mantra of progress, but gauges enlightenment, *independent of time*, in terms of the intellectual and spiritual flexibility of a culture and understands reform not as merely rereading the sources of revelation, nor as a crude attempt to overcome tradition. In her insightful essay “*Animals as Organ Suppliers? (...)*” Asmaa El Maaroufi defines Islamic reform as the reformulation of existing religious sources, which includes supplementing any answers that may be missing. The author discerns an anthropocentric bias in Muslim debates on the legality of xenotransplantation (transplantation of animal organs into humans). Xenotransplantation, a high-risk procedure for animals and humans alike, entails altering the animals (or their cell

* Prof. Dr. Bülent Ucar is Professor for Islamic Studies and Religious Education at Osnabrück University, where he is also the Director of the Institute of Islamic Theology (IIT). Prof. Dr. Mohammed Nekroumi is Professor for Islamic Religious Studies with emphasis on scholarly text analysis and science of norms at Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg, where he is also the spokesman of the Department of Islamic Religious Studies (DIRS).

structure) genetically and isolating them. Although this obviously brings with it a whole host of bioethical questions, these are hardly ever broached in Muslim debates. According to Maaroufi, the issue is predominantly approached solely from a human perspective and thus discussed in terms of Islamic dietary rules. In contrast to such a narrow and formalistic view, she takes a theological perspective, considering animals in terms of their significance in the Koran and the transmitted ethical practices of the Prophet (*sunna*). Koranic cosmology and spirituality see animals as possessing far more important and intrinsic capacities than merely functioning as domestic livestock for humans. Animals are able to serve God, praise, form communities and communicate with one another, and a series of utterances by the Prophet and his original community called for – under the threat of otherworldly or even worldly punishment – empathy towards animals. On this basis the author discusses the inclusion of the animal world into the moral community and thus sets an important signal for the bioethical dimension of Islamic reform theology in the twenty-first century. In “*Koran Hermeneutics in the Context of Evolution Theory*” Christiane Paulus and Mahmud Abushuair consider an approach with respect to the biosphere that rethinks the relationship between God and his creation. According to conventional theological doctrine, God created all living creatures of his own free will out of nothing or unanimated matter, a view that in modern polemics is extrapolated by the claim, following the example of evangelical fundamentalists, that God does not permit an evolutionary transgression of species boundaries. As the authors show, the Muslim response to evolution theory in early modernity took place in the context of Islamic self-definition and against the background of political and social systems of Western origin. The essay focuses on the Egyptian intellectual al-Ḥūlī (1895-1966). Steeped in the tradition of al-Afḡānī etc., al-Ḥūlī takes the view that Islam fosters a positive approach to both science and progress. In line with his theory, evolution unfolds in a balanced relationship between the striving for personal benefit and the altruistic service for the common good. This allows the decisive evolutionary predispositions of man to be connected with a striving impregnated (by God) towards the morally “good”, whereas the evolution theories of biology and cultural anthropology understand altruism as an amoral instrument of physical and chemical forces. Here a discussion could be opened up as to at which point al-Ḥūlī follows the Western understanding of evolution, or disregards it. In his essay “*Modern Reform Approaches in Islamic Thought (...)*”, Prof. Azelarabe Lahkim Bennani considers the relationship between law and ethics from a philosophical perspective. He bases his argumentation on the controversial thesis that the main theological discourses took their starting point from questions of injustice and thus grew out of a profoundly moral ground. The strongest resource of Islamic normativity is the emphasis placed on justice as an ethical maxim, because its purpose is to instigate and assure the “good” in human interactions. He sees the Achilles heel of the positive law anchored in modern constitutional states as residing in the claimed merging of law and morals, alt-

though in reality yawning gaps emerge between the two levels, meaning that allegiance to positive law has to be refused at times on the grounds of moral responsibility. In contrast to this, he sees the genuine strength of Islamic law in its ethical structure and flexible case law character. The complicating of law over the centuries and – even more so – its written canonization today have robbed it of this power however. Bennani’s approach can thus be understood as a calm call to revitalize the ethical roots of Islamic law in the light of *current* socio-ethical needs. By ennobling positive constitutional law to be “bulwark of legal certainty”, the author is showing at the same time that he is well aware of a real danger – that such a return could be misused to undertake a religious re-moralizing of law at the expense of a “manmade” legal order. The author’s ideas are to be understood not so much as an elaborated concept but as thought-provoking considerations for the theological-philosophical discourse. Such a gentle reform seems scarcely conceivable for the writer and publicist Dr Rachid Boutayeb when we consider his essay “*Liberation – on the Philosophy of Mohammed Aziz Lahbabi*”. Examining the personalism elaborated by the Moroccan philosopher Lahbabi (1922-1993), Boutayeb asks what is behind the longing for an intellectual Islamic heritage – and even when it is in the guise of a humanistic ethic? Is it perhaps the illusion of a construed collective memory and thus a *new* heteronomous self? Lahbabi’s personalism calls for liberation – liberation from the chauvinism of fascism, from the bondage of communism, and also, as Boutayeb sees it, the yoke of capitalism with its individualistic consumer culture. His philosophy envisions a person who can develop as an individual in his/her *present* social relations and the accompanying shared experiences. Accordingly, a philosophy *for* human individuals demands a theology *for* human individuals. If we follow the author’s gloomy pessimism, then the Islamic world today is – intellectually enfeebled due to sectarianism, despotism and religious fundamentalism – in a state of dehumanization, a state that allows nothing but an orthopractical access to religion. As a result, religion becomes just another consumer item on offer, with theologians as dealers and clergy the salesmen. It is here that Lahbabi’s emancipatory vision can prove of value to reforming theology. Theology is not about providing a set of truths of faith and rules, but rather must always take its starting point from the specific context of the living situations and relationships people find themselves in.

The miscellany departs from the thematic of modern reform ideas and approaches. Muhammed F. Bayraktar takes up the discussion on the good (*al-ḥusn*) and the bad (*al-qubḥ*) as played out between the Aš‘arites and Māturidites after the sixth/twelfth century. The focal point here was the question of human freedom. Bayraktar shows the antagonism arising out of attempts to clarify this question by examining two protagonists: ‘Aḍud ad-Dīn al-Īḡī (d. 756/1355), an Aš‘arīte, who analogous to Faḥr ad-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), started from the premise that the actions of humans are subject to divine determination and therefore cannot be classified as good or bad; and Ṣadr aš-Šarī‘a ‘Ubaydallāh b. Mas‘ūd, a

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Māturīdite, who formulated four premises on the freedom of man and how what is good and what is bad is recognizable through reason, thus taking a contrary position to al-Īǧī and his peers. Given modern discourses on the connection between Islam and political rule, together with the question if Islam and democracy are compatible, we consider it fruitful to publish excerpts from the first chapter of “*al-Aḥkām as-sulṭānīya wa-l-wilāyāt ad-dīnīya*” by Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Māwardī, translated by Mahmoud Abdallah. This work is one of the earliest studies by a Muslim author on the place of political theory in Islam.

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