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Humanism: A Tradition Common to both Islam and Europe

Abstract *The growing interest of the Arabs in Arabic translations from Greek since the 8th century has been interpreted as a sign ^of humanism in Islam. This is comparable to humanists in Europe who, since the 14th century, considered the Greek and Latin literature the foundation of spiritual and moral education. We will have to address the question of whether a similar ideal of education has been developed in harmony with religion in the Islamic cultural sphere. The perceived tension between the humanists of antiquity and Christianity has a parallel in the tensions between Islamic religiosity and a rational Islamic worldview. However, there are past and present approaches to developing an educational ideal, which is comparable to the European concept of a moral shaping of the individual. The Qur'ān and Islamic tradition do not impede the free development of personality and creative responsibility if their historicity is taken into account and if they are not elevated to an unreflected norm.*

Keywords *Humanism, Islamic and European; education; individuality; solidarity; free will and subordination; Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ; Fārābī; Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī; Miskawayh; Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī; Ghazzālī; Ibn Khaldūn; Renaissance of Islam – Italian Renaissance; Pico della Mirandola; Nahḍa; Ṭāhā Ḥusayn; Sadik J. Al-Azm; Edward W. Said; Naquib Al-Attas.*

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The formulation of my theme seems to involve the assumption that the word "humanism" is a well defined term and includes humanity. But from history we know that humanism is also an educational program of the 12th and especially of the 14th to the 16th century, in the Italian Renaissance.[1] This educational program is oriented towards Ancient Greek and Roman literature.[2]

Among the many aspects of the concept of humanism (Rüsen 2010: 273–315) we mention here the following two: On the one hand, since Kant in the 18th century, "being human" and "dignity of man" has been understood as the sense of a rational orientated moral duty towards oneself, and legal and moral obligation towards fellow human beings (Lutz-Bachmann 2006: 370; Rüsen 2010: 297). On the other hand, humanism originally means our return to the exemplary antiquity. We can

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1 On the humanism of the Italian Renaissance cf. the standard work by Kristeller 1973.
2 Cf. the survey in Graf 1998: 11-29; Menze/Romberg/Rieks 1974: 1218–1232.

take both aspects as a starting point for our analysis of the cultural history of Islam and its educational policy.[3]

The rise of Islam was essentially shaped by its dialogue with cultures that it encountered during its expansion.[4] The Arabian Peninsula before Islam was the bone of contention between Rome and Persia. Since Alexander the Great in the 4th Century BC, the Hellenistic culture had spread to Persia.Islamic culture received crucial stimulation from the Iranian and, especially, from the Greek culture (Gutas1998; Felix Klein-Franke 1980),[5] without thereby losing its identity. This resulted in the islamization of the Hellenistic heritage.[6] In the middle of the 8th century, an Iranian named Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ had translated a Greek redaction of Aristotle's *Organon,* based upon a Pehlevi version, as well as an Indian collection of fables. He is the author of a Mirror of Princes, the *Kitāb al-adab al-kabīr*, which, on the basis of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,* stresses the values of human friendship and cooperation. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs work, especially his Mirror of Princes and his collection of gnomological sayings is dominated by a sceptic-rationalistic and moralistic tone and betrays a new evaluation of the individual; one would expect from this individual solidarity and responsibility, based on religion and reason and regulated by the relation between the ruler and his subjects (Daiber 1996: 842; Nagy 2009a: 199–218; id.: Nagy 2009b: 285–301).[7]

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Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs work betrays a remarkable openness to foreign knowledge. This can be compared with the openness of the Sassanids in Persia since the 3rd century and which continued to have an impact in Islamic times. According to the Zoroastrian-Sassanian tradition, knowledge is something universal and for this reason the Sassanid ruler Shapur I in the 3rd century and Khosrow I Anushirwan in the 6th century were interested in Greek astrology, astronomy and mathematics and commissioned the translation of works on medicine and philosophy, including logic. A member of the Nestorian Christian Church, Paulus Persa, wrote

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3 On the publications about humanism in Islam and on Islamischen ‚humanists‘, who are not mentioned here completely, cf. Schöller 2001: 275–320. An inspiring and great erudition betraying an attempt to show and describe humanistic tendencies in the field of classical Arab-Islamic literature, ethics, philosophy and historiography is Goodman 2003.
4 Cf. here and on the following discussion Daiber 2012: Ch. 3.
5 It is little known that the hellenization of Islam provided important impulses even for the Arabic language (vocabulary, grammar and syntax) through translations from Greek; cf. Ullmann 2010: 31.
6 Cf. the appropriate final remark by Gätje 1985: 365f.
7 On Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ cf. Daiber 2013

in Middle Persian and dedicated to Khosrau I, his *Prolegomena* to philosophy and logic, as well as commentaries on Aristotle's *Hermeneutics* and *Analytica priora.*

This interest in logic and science finds its continuation in the Arab world and culminates with the Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd (786-809) and al-Maʾmūn (813-833) in the organization of a center for scholarly books and scholars, namely in the newly founded capital of the Abbasid Empire, Baghdad. Christian scholars translated medical and mathematical books for the Caliphs, either directly from Greek into Arabic or from Greek-Syriac, because of their practical use. Also, requirements of the Islamic religion have played an important role; I mention the determination of the direction of prayer towards Mecca, the *qibla*, with the help of mathematics and astronomy; or the technical prerequisites of water transportation for the creation of ritual purity in mosques. Finally, the interest of Muslims in Greek thought and Greek philosophy is noteworthy. Almost the entire work of Aristotle was translated into Arabic; as well as the political works by Plato and Neoplatonic texts by Plotinus and Proclus. This selection became important in several respects: An encyclopedic knowledge was made available, which leads to a concept of education that includes practical and theoretical knowledge. It is, moreover, focused on the contemplation of nature and of the cosmos. In addition, the actions of individuals in the community of the state became a central theme. There is a striking early interest in the writings of Aristotle on logic, on the categories, on hermeneutics and on the art of disputation, as well as an interest in Neoplatonic texts that assume a chain of emanations between God and the created world.

The mentioned features lead us to the core of Islamic theology, to the problem of the description of an Islamic God, who, according to Koranic interpretation is a 'secret' and who means absence *(ġayb)* and transcendence.[8] Since the 9th century God's infinity in the developing Islamic theology is placed in relationship with the visible world through Neoplatonic emanations.

For this purpose, Islamic thinkers used the so called *Theology of Aristotle,* an Arabic redaction of Plotinus's *Enneads,* or they referred to a selection of Proclus' *Elements of Theology,* known in the Middle Ages in its Latin version, the *Liber de causis.* The attributes of God were a constant subject of discussion between Islamic theologians. As early as the

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8   Cf. here and on the following discussion Daiber 2012: Ch. 1, p. 40.

9th century, the so-called Mu'tazilites, a rationalist movement, reached a radical conclusion, drawn from the existence of a man-made and re-cited Qur'ān: the Qur'ān was not the original word of God, but on the contrary, a linguistic shaping, which originated with time – or as the Muʿtazilites formulated it: The Qur'ān was "created".

This thesis of the "createdness" of the Qur'ān, which means specifically its temporality, could not last long. Theologians instead focused more and more on the allegorical interpretation of anthropomorphic descrip-tions of God in the Koran and thus avoided the attribution of human characteristics to God. A Koranic hermeneutics was developed, which already grappled with the problem of whether a verse is to be interpret-ed literally or allegorically. This led to an awareness of the possible dis-crepancy between characters, the linguistic expression on the one side and the signified, the meaning on the other side. In the religious context of the conception of a transcendent God the linguistic expression, the term became a problem and became the subject of ongoing reflections with different, "humanistic" shapings.[9] In addition, the causality of the visible world is no longer directly related to God, but rather is a result of many or even infinite number of intermediate causes – comparably to the Neo-Platonic doctrine of emanations. According to the Muʿtazilite doctrine, which is based on Aristotle's conception of substances, God did not create the visible accidents, but the carriers of these accidents, the substances. According to the Muʿtazilite Muʿammar Ibn Abbad as-Sulamī, who died in 830 AD, the accidents are the final product of an infinite chain of determining causes, which begin with God. This Neo-platonic model saved God's infinity, as the visible world is not deter-mined directly from God. Muʿammar's younger contemporary Naẓẓām restricted God's work to the nature that God has created in things.

At the same time, the discussions of the Muʿtazilites in the 9th and 10th century created the necessary room for the free will of man;[10] they in-tended to limit the old Arabic fatalism and Islamic Qur'ānic divine pre-destination. Man has free will to be guided by the concepts of good or evil; however, his decisions, although based on his own, follow the laws of nature, which he cannot escape.

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9   Here I agree with the thesis of Carter 1997: 27–38. In this article he established this philological interest in kinds of humanism, which he called ‚philosophical hu-manism‘, ‚intellectual humanism‘, ‚literary humanism‘, ‚religious humanism‘ and ‚le-galistic humanism‘. On this cf. Schöller 2001: 290ff.
10   On the following discussion cf. Daiber 2012: Ch. 2.

The reassessment of human will is the product of a polarity between divine immanence and determination on the one hand, and transcendence of an infinite God on the other. The human will implies increasing sovereignty of the individual, who is responsible for his own decisions. In case the Qur'ān and prophetic tradition required an adaptation to the changing circumstances of the time, a Muslim lawyer made his judicial decisions, and responsible considerations on his own; he followed the comparative and deductive method of analogy. Authority and responsibility of the lawyer, the *faqīh*, originally meant the authority and responsibility of the "knowing", the *faqīh*.

The lawyer was in the service of the Caliph, the Deputy of God on earth, and regulated the life of the Islamic community, the *umma*. Here, the ethics of the individual played a dominant role in its integration with the sharī'a and in addition adopted approaches of the already mentioned Mirror of Princes.

The critical reflection of the relationship between ruler and subject, the reassessment of the human will with regard to the freedom of man to opt for the good and to avoid the evil, culminated in the 10th century in a remarkable conception of an ideal state, developed by the philosopher Fārābī in his late work written in 950 and called "Principles of the Views of Residents of the Excellent City."[11] He does not offer a guide to the perfect state, but principles that govern the behavior of individuals in a world state, that is ruled by a charismatic leader, who is inspired by God and who has intellectual and rhetorical qualities; he has the task to inform his people about good and evil, enabling them to comply with the rules of a religion that turns out to be the realization, the reality of philosophical truth, of wisdom. Everyone should strive to achieve it in an endless process of alignment with God. Religion appears here as a constant challenge to reflect on the desirable good and avoidable evil.

According to Fārābī, doing the good, compliance with the rules of religion, is the object of the actions of man's will, of his *af ʿ āl irādīya*. It arises from the human will *(irāda)* and is based on man's "selection" *(iḫtiyār)*. "Will" and "selection" are powers of the human soul and nourished by the divine active intellect.

Reflection, volition and ethical behavior in the process of approximation to God appeared as instruments of a society, which Fārābī considers

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11   On details of the following discussion cf. Daiber 2010.

to be joined by the attribute *insānīya,* "humanness" across the boundaries between peoples and nations. The species "humanity" or "humanness" became the basis for the peaceful coexistence of peoples and nations.[12] This sounds like the principle of solidarity, which more than 400 years after Fārābī became a central theme in the "Introduction" (*Muqaddima*) to world history, written by the most important Islamic historian, Ibn Khaldūn; the principle of solidarity appears as ʿaṣabīya, a sense of community that exists among the nomads in an authentic manner; it is a prerequisite for social union. This is true not only for Muslims but for all humanity. For this reason Islamic prophecy and revelation are no longer essential pre-conditions (Daiber 2002: 43).[13]

We return to Fārābī. He wrote in a century that was called "the Renaissance of Islam" (Kraemer 1986: 1ff.) because it is compared with the much later Italian Renaissance and its humanist interest in ethics. This interest in ethics was part of the reception of hellenistic scientific and philosophical heritage in Islam. Differing from the Renaissance in Islam we find in the later Italian Renaissance a stronger interest in the rhetorical and literary traditions of antiquity, in the art, architecture and style of the ancient world. The common interest in ethics can be an explanation that both in the Islamic Renaissance and in the Italian Renaissance reflections are beginning to emerge on individualism, on human dignity and on cosmopolitan ideas about humanity.

The secretary and courtier Abū Ḥayyān at-Tauḥīdī, who died in 414/1023 and who has been called a humanist (Ibid., 212ff.), wrote a treatise on friendship *(Risala fī ṣ-Ṣadāqa wa-ṣ-ṣadīq,* in Tauḥīdī 1958-60*)* (Bergé 1979). The scholar Miskawayh (Kraemer 1986: 222ff.),[14] who died in 421/1030 in Isfahan and who was the librarian of the Buyid vizier Ibn al-ʿAmīd, wrote a philosophical ethics with the title "Improvement of the Characters" *(al-Tahḏīb aḫlāq),* in which, under the influence of Plato and Aristotle, he discussed love and friendship as the basis for harmony among people. Miskawayh has inspired Rāġib al-Iṣfahānīs ethics, which he called "Ways and Means to the Good Actions of the Law" *(aḏ-Ḏarīʿa ilā Makarim aš-šarīʿa)* and which influenced al-Ġazzālī (d. 505/1111) in his "Revival of Religious Sciences" (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn*).[15] Rāġib played a

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12 Cf. Ibid.: 75 and the references given there. – On Fārābī's concept of *insānīya* as species cf. also Fārābī 1970: 78, 7ff.
13 See also the comparative and inspiring study by Hellmut Ritter (1948).
14 On Miskawaih's ethics Fakhry 1994: 107ff., esp. 115ff.
15 On the details cf. Mohamed 2006: 347ff. and on Ġazzālī Fakhry 1994: 193ff.

leading role in his effort to bring evidence from the Qur'ān, in order to demonstrate the harmony of Koranic and philosophical ethics and to give a rational justification of its ethics.

These efforts appear as a result of discussions in schools and scholarly circles such as the one around Abū Sulaiman al-Siǧistānī (Kraemer 1986: 103ff.), and allow us to speak of a "Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam". Here we have to be aware that they are part of a lively exchange of ideas between scholars on philosophical and scientific questions. In letters sent to the Buyid ruler ʿAḍud ad-Daula, the aforementioned vizier Ibn al-ʿAmīd (gest.360/970) wrote on meteorology, physics, cosmology, astronomy, mechanics and psychology, some of which is quite original and allows -not entirely without reason – mutatis mutandis, a comparison with the Italian polymath Leonardi da Vinci from the 14th/15th century (Daiber 1993: 1ff.).

Encyclopedic knowledge was being developed, which became a model for teaching in the centuries to come (Brentjes 2002). Under Aristotle's influence, scholars classified sciences with branches of linguistics, logic, mathematics, physics, metaphysics, politics, jurisprudence and theology (Biesterfeldt 2002).

During this time an Ismaili group of authors composed an encyclopedia with the title "Treatises of the Brethren of Purity" *(Rasā' il Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafā');* their aim was purification of the soul and closeness to God through increasing knowledge. This can be considered an Islamic variant of the educational program called *egkyklios paideia* from the Greco-Roma era, which would shape the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as the *Seven Liberal Arts* (Kraemer 1986: 9).

The Islamic version stressed the universal character of the ancient sciences, the ʿulūm al-awā'il, which the first "philosopher of the Arabs" *(faylasūf al-ʿarab)*, al-Kindī in the 9th century, called "human sciences" *(al-ʿulūm al-insānīya)*, because they are a common property of mankind (Ibid.: 10).

The emerging awareness of humanity as something that includes all nations, becomes a breeding ground not only for Fārābī's aforementioned concept of "humanity" or "humanness" as a basis for peaceful coexistence of people and nations; it also created the basis for the great thought of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, an Iraqi Christian, who died in 363/974. This student of the Muslim philosopher Fārābī tried to prove, that behind

every verbal statement a universal truth is concealed, insofar as it is based on logic and reason (Ibid.: 113–115). Logic and reason connect humanity and oblige each individual to perfection *(kamāl),* to friendship *(maḥabba),* affection *(tawaddud),* compassion *(taḥannun),* friendliness *(ra'fa),* and goodness *(raḥma)* to all men who share a rational soul and who worship the divine power. Such a "humanity" *(insānīya)* connects all beings into one and the same tribe *(qabīl),* which belongs to the same family.[16]

Here, similarities to statements of the Italian humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola should be pointed out: in 1486, at the age of 24, he wrote his "Oration on the Dignity of Man" *(Oratio de hominis dignitate),*[17] in which he stressed ethical and philosophical thinking as a way to self-development of people and as a universal bond of humanity.

300 Pico della Mirandola was not afraid in his *Oratio,* which he originally called "Song of Peace" *(Carmen de Pace),* to refer in addition to Greek, Latin and Christian sources, also to Arabic and Hebrew texts; he starts his *Oratio* with a quotation from an unidentifiable Muslim scholar named ʿAbdallāh (Makdisi 1990: 307),[18] according to which nothing is more worthy of admiration *(admirabilius)* than man.

In his cosmopolitan setting Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī appears to be more detailed than Pico della Mirandola. Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī offers a description and justification of the bond between people, which aims at respectful treatment of the individual and his relationship to the other. Prompted by the observation, that the society consists of "excellent" *(fuḍalā')* and "imperfect" *(nuqaṣā')* people, it adds a significant passage on the relationship between rulers and subjects, which should be marked by the previously mentioned characteristics and which should not loose sight of the welfare *(maṣāliḥ)* of people. Clearly here the legacy of Yaḥyā's Muslim teacher Fārābī is felt. In Fārābī's "Ideal State" the regent is philosopher and prophet, who must have the intellectual and pedagogical features to persuade his subjects of the demands of religion and to cause them to do the good.

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16 Cf. the passage in the ethics of Yaḥā Ibn ʿAdī, in his *Tahḏīb al-aḫlāq* (2002: 106-107, § 5.14); a translation of this text can also be found in Kraemer 1986: 115.
17 Based on the text of the first edition ed. and translated by Gerd von der Gönna, Stuttgart 2009. On Pico della Mirandola cf. Gerl 1989: 63ff. and Gröschner/Kirste/Lembcke 2008: esp. 159-186, 199ff., 221ff., 235-250.
18 A remote similarity exists with a passage in Ghazālīs Persian *Kimīya' as-saʿāda,* s. the German translation Ritter 1979: 26.

Here as well as in Pico della Mirandola, there is no antinomy between humanistic thinking that emphasized individuality and rational independence on the one hand, and religion on the other. But such an antinomy arises in Europe, increasingly in the 16th century, in the German Reformation since Luther, which more and more called into question the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church as a guideline.

This post-medieval orientation crisis discovered Cicero anew and his writings *De officiis* and the *Tusculanes*, which at the beginning of the 16th century became bestsellers in their German translation (Graf 1998: 25). Since then, the tense relationship between humanism and Christian religion has never really improved; this fact explains the increasing development of humanism in the 19th and 20th century as an educational program with a focus on Greek (Ibid.: 28, 11ff.).

Such a development found an echo in the Middle East in the 19th century. Intellectuals in Egypt, during the Arab renaissance in modern times, the *Nahḍa*, became interested in the common foundations of Europe and the Near East, namely Greece (Kreutz 2007: 26ff.).[19] In this time the *Iliad* of Homer was translated into Arabic (Kreutz 2007: 29ff.). The most prominent figure of the emerging Arab humanism is the Egyptian Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (born in 1889), who understood the study of the ancient world, of Plato and especially of Aristotle, as a training program for the emancipation of the rational individual and for democratic thinking (Ibid.: 46ff.).

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Ṭāhā Ḥusayn attaches special importance to Alexander the Great from the 4th century B.C., because, through his campaigns in Asia, he spread universal Greek culture. Greek culture is one of the roots of Arab culture, and in turn, Arab culture is its completion (Ibid.: 72f.). Here, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn follows the European Enlightenment and assumes an equality of religions, which according to him are a form of universal humanity, which is based on democracy and philosophical reason. If they disappear, then there will be a disastrous symbiosis of religion and dictatorship (Ibid.: 74 and ff.).

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, as well as other representatives of the Arab Renaissance of the modern era (Ibid.: 83ff.), is not antireligious. However, the reactions and developments after Ṭāhā Ḥusayn lead to a polarization of Islamic religion and humanism. The Syrian scholar Sadik J. Al-Azm

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19   In addition and on the following discussion the review by Pormann 2010: 95–106.

of Damascus (born in 1934) has discussed this in a 2004 lecture given in Tübingen on "Islam and secular humanism" (Al-Azm 2005). In his view a reconciliation of Islam and humanism, which he called "secular humanism",[20] can be established from the history of Islam, but not with regard to Islamic dogma. He assumes that Islam was in the past "a living, dynamic and developing religion", which "responded to different conditions and rapidly changing political situations" and for this reason was compatible with different social and political structures (ibid.: 31 and 33). According to Al-Azm, Islam is in principle compatible with secular humanism. Here, he considered Turkey to be exemplary (41ff.) and he proposed among other things (57ff.), that the *šarīʿa* should be substantially amended and that Islam must renounce the idea of an irreconcilable antagonism between the Islamic land of faith and the land of unbelief (59).

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In his discussion of Samuel Huntington's thesis of the clash of civilizations (63ff.), which he accepts only in a limited way, because Islam is at best a "civilization or culture in terms of history and tradition" (71), Al-Azm, in the footsteps of Max Weber, makes the following observation: the idea of the clash of civilizations arises in a situation, where a reified system of basic Western beliefs and values is juxtaposed against another reified but incompatible system of equally basic Muslim beliefs and values.

The implied "essentialist" and "static" or "ahistorical" (67, 69) consideration of values and concepts appears to be the opposite of what Islam had been according to Al-Azm in the past, namely a "living, dynamic and developing religion".

Al-Azm here did not discuss the problem of conceptualization of values. Are values and their terms defined in an archetypal manner? Are they, once defined, universally valid at all times and everywhere?

A native of Palestine, the American literary critic Edward W. Said (1935-2003) in his posthumously published work *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* has criticized traditional humanism as ahistorical and essentialist; therefore he argues for a critical and transparent humanism without geographical boundaries that corrects itself constantly (Radhakrishnan 2010: 434ff. and 442ff.).[21] In the footsteps of the Italian philosopher of history and law Giambattista Vico (1668-1699) and his work

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20   On the concept of the secular humanism cf. Schöller 2001: 301.
21   Cf. Rosenthal 2010: 468ff.; Mitchell 2010.

on the "New science" for Said the world is made in humanism by man, not by God; what is made by man can be understood by him rationally.

In the view of Said, religion is an irrational product of human imagination, which can nevertheless determine thought and action of humans. (Mitchell 2010: 492ff.)

Man's rationality is in a constant process of confrontation with the irrational product of human imagination, that is to say, with religion. This requires self-knowledge and self-criticism, and that forms the essence of humanism. This humanism manifests itself in the critical discourse of the word, in philology, which connects writers, intellectuals and critics, as well as creativity, learning and judgement (Ibid.: 494 and ff.).

Edward Said's position is significant in three aspects: 1. in the emphasis on the factor of the human being as a subject, in which rationality of thinking and irrationality of religion are opposite to each other; 2. in the assessment of religion as a reality of man, even as the object of human creativity, of his imagination; 3. in the evaluation of language as a tool of humanism, which must constantly define its values in a new critical discourse.

Edward Said hereby provides a theoretical foundation for the existence of humanism in Islam. Our historical excursus has already shown that there has already been an Islamic humanism in the past. It manifests itself not so much as a norm, but rather as striving for ethical values, as critical consciousness, as self-knowledge and reflection on the will and mind of man in his responsibility and position in society and in his dependence on God and the divine inspiration.

There were attempts in the history of Islam to emphasize the universality of humanistic thought.[22]

The philosopher Fārābī connects such a universality with the notion that a ruler of the world state must be someone who in his knowledge has recourse to the divine inspiration of a prophet; moreover, all subjects should look toward God in a constant process of reflection and for ethical action. They are tools of a society that Fārābī considers to be connected across the boundaries between peoples and nations by the attribute *insānīya,* humanity. Here, Fārābī inspired, as we have seen, his Christian student Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī.

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22 Cf. the still worthwhile reading article by Schulemann 1950; in addition Grousset 1955: 28ff.

But Islamic tradition and dogma of the increasingly consolidated Islamic religion led to the rigidity of structures, which made impossible a dynamic adaptation to the changing circumstances of time. Moreover, we are faced with the dilemma that even humanist thinking, as a generally and universally valid standard, tends to become a fixed and static rule.

Fārābī seems to have been aware of this dilemma, as he does not offer a clear system or details of an ideal state. Fārābī merely encourages to strive for alignment with God under divinely inspired and charismatic leadership, under the guidance of an educator[23] and philosopher and in compliance with the laws. It is primarily an epistemological act, which in constant reflection should lead to self-education, but also to the critical attitude towards any political system.

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Fārābī has not discussed the problem of any terminology or developments or incorrect ratings of concepts; nor did Abū Bišr Mattā Ibn Yūnus or Abū Saʿīd as-Sīrāfī (Kraemer 1986: 110ff.) before him nor his pupil Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī after him (Ibid.: 113f.). For Fārābī the existing things are identical to their meaning – they are in their nature and in their meaning something created by God. For his pupil Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī the meaning is in its linguistic structure logical, rational and a universally valid truth (Ibid.: 114f.).

For a Muslim, the Qurʾān had to be the universally valid truth, even if in its allegorical interpretation. It has been suggested that the formulations of the Koranic language are something produced in time and "created" by God – this was the dogma of the so-called Muʿtazilites in the 9th century – or the Qurʾān was considered to be a literary document that must be interpreted in its historical context – this was the thesis of a few Muslim scholars of the 20th century, who faced the strong resistance of Muslim orthodoxy (Hildebrandt 2007). In their view the reputation of the Qurʾān as incontrovertible truth and guideline is at stake.

The inability to distinguish between historical formation and religious truth, leads to an assessment of Koranic statements as archetypal truths. In a small monograph entitled "The Concept of Education in Islam", published in 1980 and translated into Arabic in 1998, the Malaysian philosopher and scholar Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (b. 1931) puts forth the view that the Qurʾān and the prophetic traditions in the

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23   The educative function of the ruler appears after Fārābī also in the 12th century in Averroes, cf. Butterworth 2006: 54.

Ḥadīth are in their linguistic shape archetypes of knowledge and do not constitute historical developments.

What was not clear in the Qur'an, can be explained by the exegesis. The Qur'ān has islamized Arabic and non-Arabic languages of Muslim peoples; semantic changes or deformations of meanings are the result of so-called "deïslamization" and result from lack of education *(adab)*.

Education is according to Al-Attas the ability, to understand the wording and the meaning of the Qur'ān: In this manner man is able to learn how he has to behave before God and as a member of a good society and how he has to act.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas considers this knowledge to be wisdom and justice. "Education" *(adab)* is knowledge and acting accordingly, *Adab* is man's awareness of the task, to do virtuous acts towards his family, his society and his people, with the help of the rational soul. A leading position should only have those who have knowledge with *high moral, intellectual and spiritual standards,* and who watch over the proper use of the Koranic language and thus avoid misconceptions about Islam and its ideology.

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Naquib al-Attas's conception of "education" touches with our conception of education as the formation of man by increasing knowledge and reflection on the ethics of human beings and their role in society. However, it appears to restrict the creative imagination of the individual by the divine inspiration of a normative Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is not a product of a particular historical period and its archetypal truth is not doubted.

The foreign, that which is not Islam, is according to Al-Attas, not enriching and not stimulating; it leads to *deïslamization* to *secularization.* Islam is the unfolding of a universal divine wisdom, as it has been revealed in the Qur'ān. Here Al-Attas joins the Iranian philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933), who since 1984 has taught at George Washington University in the USA. Nasr however, emphasized the commonality of ethical and "spiritual" or religious values of Islam and the West,[24] this on the basis of universal humanism (Nasr 2002).

Al-Attas's conception of education is different from the contemporary humanistic ideal of education[25] that focusses on the formation of man

24 Cf. in this book the epilogue pp. 307-316 ('The ethical and spiritual nature of human life, East and West').
25 Cf. the stimulating brochure by Dörpinghaus 2009.

and his identity in dialogue with one another. Al-Attas's view limits the possibility of a critical reflection of the individual, as well as his openness to a diversity of interests that give life its meaning, even in the encounter with other cultures.

However, Al-Attas's conception of education is in touch with the humanistic ideal of education, inasmuch as the maturity of man, called "Mündigkeit" by Kant (Lutz-Bachmann 2006: 368–371), became crucial as a constant reflection of the individual over himself, over his ethics and over his role in society. The Qur'ān remains for Al-Attas a guideline, whereas traditional humanism uses universal, generally valid values as a norm. However, can we be sure in our assessment of human dignity, justice, and democracy? Or is humanism a never-ending process of critical reflection of man about himself and about others?

306 Fārābī spoke about reflection, volition and ethical behavior of the individual and his will in the process of alignment with God; Edward Said spoke about the critical discourse, in which humanistic values constantly must be reshaped and their terminology must be redefined. Neither offer a panacea; nor is it basically the case with Al-Attas; he combines critical reflection and the forming of the judgement with the never-ending task of a "creative" (Heath 1989)[26] interpretation of the Qur'ān and its real meaning.

There was and there is an Islamic humanism. Through Arab-Latin translations it shaped scholastic thinking in the Middle Ages, as well the educational program.[27] Today, humanism, as well as an Islamic humanism, can be a basis for the abolition of the inhuman rules of *Šarīʿa* and of irrational polarizations of "believers" and "infidels". This would be a prerequisite for ensuring a co-existence between Muslims and non-Muslims.

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26   Cf. in addition, Schöller 2001: 304.
27   This is in my opinion convincingly shown by Makdisi 1990. Cf. the summaries by Makdisi 1989 and Makdisi 1997. – The criticism by Schöller 2001: 284f. aims at the question, whether parallels between Islamic and medieval humanism indeed can be traced back to influences or were the result of independent developments (on the problem cf. Daiber 1975: 10ff. However, the influence of the Islamic-Arabic culture cannot be doubted; this does not exclude the possibility, that there existed subsequently partly independent parallel developments.

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Hans Dajber

Humanizam: zajednička tradicija islama i Evrope

Apstrakt

Sve veće zanimanje Arapa za arapske prevode sa grčkog jezika od 8. veka interpretirano je kao znak humanizma u islamu. Ovo je uporedivo sa humanistima u Evropi koji su od 14. veka smatrali grčku i latinsku književnost osnovom duhovnog i moralnog obrazovanja. Mora se postaviti pitanje, da li je u islamskoj kulturološkoj sferi razvijan sličan ideal edukacije koji je u skladu sa islamskom religijom. Opažena tenzija između humanista antič-kog razdoblja i hrišćanstva poseduje paralelu u tenzijama između islam-ske religioznosti i racionalnog islamskog svetonazora. Ipak, postoje prošli i sadašnji pristupi koji će razvijati obrazovni ideal, koji se može uporediti sa evropskim konceptom moralnog oblikovanja pojedinca. *Kur'ān* i islam-ska tradicija ne sprečavaju slobodni razvoj ličnosti i kreativnu odgovornost ukoliko je njihova istoričnost uzeta u obzir i ukoliko nisu uzdignuti do ne-promišljene norme.

Ključne reči　humanizam, islamski i evropski; edukacija; individualnost; solidarnost; slobodna volja i podređenje; Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ; Fārābī; Yaḥyā IbnʿAdī; Miskawayh; Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī; Ghazzālī; Ibn Khaldūn; islam-ska renesansa – italijanska renesansa; Pico della Mirandola; Nahḍa; Ṭāhā Ḥusayn; Sadik J. Al-Azm; Edward W. Said; Naquib Al-Attas.