12 Teaching Tolerance and Open-Minded Approaches to Understanding Sacred Texts

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Educational institutions occupy a pivotal place in the social system, linking childhood and adulthood, the domestic and the political, the private and the public. In modern democratic states, the education offered by public schools promotes the values of liberty and equality without ratifying the moral convictions held by any specific religious group. In many modern Arab countries, by contrast, the state is not neutral and neither is the education it offers its citizens. Instead of simply promoting the values of liberty and equality, the public schools also endorse the moral authority of Islam.

Most Arab states (through the influence of dominant elites and individuals) uphold an outdated and conservative vision of the role of religion in educational institutions. As a result of their educational policies, such states generate chronic cognitive dissonance among students, who are exposed to the secular ideals promoted by many political leaders as well as the religious doctrines promulgated by their Islamic teachers. An ambivalent and divided citizenry becomes a chronic source of potential political crisis at home, and of terrorism abroad.

Under the circumstances, a reform of basic education is absolutely urgent in order to modernize Arab states. The goal is to stop schools from aggravating the contradictions between moral communities and liberalizing regimes, and between historical religion and civil religion. Public schools in Arab states need to instill, instead, the value of tolerance and the skills needed to read sacred texts with an open mind. The Tunisian example shows that reform is possible—on the condition that a political will for reform can be cultivated by the leaders of Arab and Muslim states.

Since at least September 11, 2001, a great deal has been written on the Islamic educational system, including excellent analyses of the damage caused by madrasas, but little has been written on how to reform this system. This chapter is not offered as a work of neutral scholarly research, but as a contribution to the reformation of the teaching of Islam in public schools, a reform that is yet to be realized. Inspired by the Tunisian experience of reform as implemented by Mohamed Charfi while Minister of Education, it addresses, in a secular and liberal *engagement*, the main question posed to any Islamic educational system today: Should public schools teach Islam? If so, how

should Islam be taught? And what should be taught? The chapter is prescriptive in tone, offering genuine technical solutions, never offered before, aimed at balancing Islamic tradition and civil religion.

ARAB COUNTRIES BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Since the nineteenth century, when the Muslims entered the Modern Age, recurrent efforts have been made to reconcile Islam, revised and reinterpreted, to modern conceptions of law and the state. These efforts have oscillated between attempts to impose a stringent secularism (as in Egypt under Nasser and Iran under the Shah) and equally strenuous efforts to protect the political authority traditionally exercised by religious institutions (as in Saudi Arabia and in Iran after the Revolution). One consequence of these oscillations is that many Arab and Muslim states today are neither totally traditional nor wholly secular, but rather marked by "a distorted duality" (Sharabi, 1988, Fr. Trans., 1996, pp. 23–28) or a "fundamental breach" (Shayegan, 1989, pp. 65–79), which has ultimately produced "composite formulae, if not failures" (Badie, 1986, p. 177).

The Political Context

All Arab countries have constitutions except Saudi Arabia and Libya. The former has a law decreed by the king (who has legislative power) in 1926 that governs public power and a 1958 regulation about the functioning of the council of ministers, both recently confirmed by a 1992 "fundamental charter." In Libya, a 1977 resolution of the "General Congress of the People" takes the place of a constitution.

Regarding the constitutional relationship between religion and state, Islamic states are classified in four categories: eleven have declared themselves to be Islamic states, twenty-two have declared Islam as the state religion, eleven have declared themselves to be secular states, and eleven have no constitutional declaration (Stahnke and Blitt, 2005). The constitutions of most Arab states rather grant an important place to the Islamic sacred law (*sharîa*), even as they adopt, at least formally, some principles of secularism.

In the first place, either the state religion is Islam or else the *sharîa* is the principal source of legislation. In many cases, constitutions simply state that Islam is the religion of the state.[1] In other cases, the state proclaims itself as Islamic.[2]

An avowedly Islamic state such as Saudi Arabia is supposed to apply the *sharîa*. By contrast, in a country like Tunisia, where the state religion is Islam, there is no such expectation. This is because Islam is not the same as the *sharîa*. It is larger and susceptible to diverse interpretations, not to mention the fact that the state reserves the right to proclaim norms that do not conform to the letter of the *sharîa*.

In many countries that uphold Islam as a state religion, the law as a result does not necessarily conform to the *sharîa*. This is true for penal legislation in most Arab countries. In such countries, judges, in the absence of an express disposition dictating recourse to the *sharîa*, uphold the laws passed by the representatives of the people (Charfi, 1987).

Unfortunately, in countries where the state has proclaimed itself Islamic, the constitution often stipulates that all laws must be in conformity with the letter of the *sharîa*. The clearest example is Saudi Arabia. The law of 1926 governing public powers states in article 6 that "legal norms should be in conformity with the Book of God, with the *sunna* [tradition] of the Prophet, and with the conduct of companions and the first pious generations." More recently, in 1992, the kingdom decreed a "fundamental charter" proclaiming that "the constitution is the book of God and the *sunna* of the Prophet."[3] Other constitutions indicate in varying fashions that the *sharîa* itself is a "principal [or major] source" of legislation.[4] Apart from the Koran, Libya does not recognize the three other sources of the *sharîa* (the tradition of the Prophet, consensus, and the analogical reasoning of legal scholars). "The Holy Koran is the law" is the sole principle governing the country (the second clause of the 1977 resolution).

In many Arab states, accession to high office is conditional upon the candidate's belonging to the Islamic religion. In cases where the constitution does not expressly stipulate it, this condition can be deduced from the general statement of the Islamic character of the State. Only the 1926 Lebanese constitution and the 1992 one of Djibouti are silent on the religion of both the state and the head of state.

Different Arab states regulate religious beliefs and practices in different ways. Some charge a Religious Ministry with overseeing worship, while others appoint a *Mufti,* a functionary with religious competence, who is charged with furnishing religious *responsa* (consultations), or supervising a house of *ifta* (consultation). Some states have simply taken over the hiring of preachers and of prayer *imams*, the financing of charitable associations and institutions of religious education, and the massive construction of mosques. Throughout the Arab world, states sanction the use of the Islamic calendar alongside the universal calendar; guarantee the commemoration of religious festivals; and organize competitions of a religious character (Koranic litanies). They also insure that public places close during the month of fasting, prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages during this same month, and prescribe the broadcasting of the Friday prayer on state radio and television.

At the same time, the constitutions of many Arab states do accept the organic and functional separation of powers and the separation between governmental and administrative authorities. Three constitutions declare in their preambles the state's adherence to international treaties on the rights of man.[5] Still, it is often stipulated that the conditions for the exercise of these liberties should not threaten public order, national interest, and morality.

Most Arab Muslim countries with the exception of some Gulf States hold periodic elections. Even if these elections rarely have real democratic

value because they are not organized in an honest, transparent, and regular fashion (due to the existence of a single party or a dominant party supported by the administration), the formal existence of a parliament that supposedly represents the people means that legislative power has been, officially and actually, removed from the *ulema* (or clerics), and entrusted to representatives of the people.

The State and Education

While the other countries of the world prepare their children to enter a complex and heterogeneous society, most Muslim countries continue to prepare young people for a life of religious purity. Unfortunately there are few exhaustive studies on the status of religion in Arab public schools. Numerical data are skimpy, monographs on particular countries uneven, and analyses of the content of school textbooks fragmentary. We know little about average years of schooling, rates of literacy, or the disparities in education between rich and poor, men and women.

Three Arab Muslim universities have survived since the Middle Ages: Zeitouna in Tunisia, Al Azhar in Egypt, and Qarawiyin in Morocco. Various reforms of these universities were initiated in the nineteenth century, but they all failed. More recently, these same universities have formed secularized and modern subsidiaries that teach the natural sciences and humanities in a way that is still imbued with religion.

Most modern Arab schools make the teaching of Islam a central part of their curriculum. It is hard to say how many hours of teaching are devoted to Islam, due to the fact that it is taught in all disciplines. Moreover, one has to take into account the para-scholastic influence of the *Kouteb* (private Koranic pre-schools) and of private Koranic schools that are operating in practically all Islamic countries from Afghanistan to Morocco. Several studies of public education (Nucho, 1993; Rugh, 2002; Salloum, 1995) suggest that the number of hours devoted purely to religious instruction is high from the first to the twelfth year of education: "In Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait, for example, an average of about 10% of total class hours is devoted to it each year. In Saudi Arabia it consumes 32% of class time for grades 1 to 3, 30% in grades 7 to 9, and then 15% or more for grades 10 to 12. The figures for Qatar are 17–20% in grades 1–6, 14% in grades 7–10, then 8–11% in grades 11–12" (Rugh, 2002, p. 404).

Much of this teaching turns out to be *contrary* to human rights. The civil war between Muslims and non-Muslims in Sudan that has dragged on for many years probably explains (without justifying) the lengthy passages on *jihad* in the schoolbooks of that country, where one finds an apology for this violence alongside the frequent reminder of the legal rules concerning it.[6] Egyptian books speak of tolerance but add that Islam is the only true religion.[7] The legal principle of "enjoining what is right and forbidding

what is wrong" [3:104][8] is used to explain that struggling against evil can go on in both word and action, thus indirectly inciting justification of the violence that Islamists commit against the state and persons[9], which has been criticized (Abu Zayd, 1992, p. 104).

In still other Arab textbooks, women always have a position inferior to men. Mother is in the kitchen while father is in the library.[10] This situation is not only a social fact but also a religious rule. A Yemeni schoolbook pushes the duty to obey even farther, stressing a rule invented by the *fiqh* (Islamic law) that a woman's submission to God is unacceptable if it is not accompanied by submission to her husband; a woman's prayer is even inadmissible when her husband is discontented with her.[11] Similarly, Moroccan school textbooks, modeled on those of other Muslim countries, teach all the corporal punishments ordered in the *sharîa*, from whipping to stoning (supported by justifications for them).[12] They also assert[13] that freedom is permitted only on condition that the *sharîa* is not questioned, and as long as reason and the critical spirit are not employed for the criticism of the *sharîa* rules.[14] In most Arab countries, an apologetic presentation of the history of Islam is found not only in religious classes but also in language instruction. For example, a Moroccan book called *Rules of the Arabic Language*[15] exalts the Caliph Harûn al-Rashid to the status of a "just and virtuous prince"—whereas the reality is much more nuanced, to say the least.

As a whole, most textbooks are meant to encourage students to live in an "Islamic ambiance." For example, the Moroccan book of Arabic readings used in the sixth year of primary school, supposedly a language and not a religious book, takes as themes for the opening lessons: 1. Koranic verses; 2. Prophet's *hadiths* (sayings); 3. "I am Muslim"; 4. Islam and consultation; 5. Koranic verses; 6. the most worthy faster, etc.[16] A Morrocan survey of 865 young boys and girls from the urban middle class confirms the impact of such readings: 69 percent assert believing in magic, 75.8 percent in superstition, and 79 percent trust only family; for the most part they think that "Islam enjoins freedom, justice, fraternity and equality" while "capitalism cultivates hate, exploitation and segregation"; and in a communist system, people "are deprived from freedom and live in horror and repression" (Bourqia et al., 2000).

Under pressure from traditionalists, each Arab country has witnessed a manipulation of the education system. As a result, throughout the Arab world, many elements of education are incompatible with human rights and the liberal values of the modern democratic state.

TOWARD A REFORM OF EDUCATION IN ARAB COUNTRIES

To prepare students better to assume the duties of citizenship in a world that every day becomes more cosmopolitan, a certain number of reforms seem to us essential.

Forging Communal Ties in an Age of Globalization

What are the markers and emblems of an Arab and Islamic identity that are compatible with the rights and duties of democratic citizenship? And by what process of identification does the student feel Arab and Muslim?

It is extremely difficult to answer these questions. Even if one had a correct answer, one might truly hesitate, when it comes to education, between revealing the truth to students and inculcating the founding myths of the community. There is surely an age at which education deconstructs the myths and helps historical truth to triumph. But, at what age? Plato in the *Republic* concedes that one should teach children the city's fables and myths, after which one initiates them into true discourse. For us, the ideal would be to gradually educate them in the relativity of things: teach them that identity is far from stable, static, and permanent, but rather is fragile, fluctuating, and transient.

Unfortunately, for the whole Muslim world and especially for the Arab world, this way of seeing things poses problems. For obvious political reasons, pan-Islamic and pan-Arab identities have been diffused in schools as if such identities were indisputable, permanent, trans-historic, and transnational. This creates a grave tension between truth and history, identity and change, national and transnational identities. Three issues loom large in Arab schools today: how to teach students about their identities as Muslims, as Arabs, and as Arab-speaking language users.

Islamic Unity

While it is true that one can find more or less common markers of Islamic identity, it is no less true that Islamic unity is a chimera. It is manifestly illusory to hope someday to reunite within the same political entity countries as different and alien to each other as, for example, Afghanistan and Senegal, both part of the Organization of Islamic Conference, an international organization created in 1972 (Rabat-Morroco), founded on the criterion of one single condition, that is, allegiance to Islam that gathers together fifty-seven countries otherwise divided by ethnicity, language, and culture. A diversity that precludes transnational identity also affects the principle of trans-historic identity. The expression "*Umma,*" community of believers, which once referred to the small number of the faithful around the Prophet in Medina (622 CE), can today no longer have a relevant political implication. In medieval times, this *Umma*, supposedly represented by the Caliphate at Damascus (661–750) and then Baghdad (750–1258), willingly compromised with dynasties and autonomous regional powers, starting in the ninth century in the Middle East, the Maghreb, and Andalusia. These powers emancipated themselves, either de facto and by the sword, or *de jure* and through tacit agreement, from the control of the central caliphate. This fact has been historically recognized. In the eleventh century, Mawerdi

proposed a distinction between "the emirate of conquest" (*imarat al-istila*) and "the emirate of attribution" (*imarat al-istikfa*), precisely to differentiate provinces that had freed themselves through violence from those that had been freed through a gentlemen's agreement between the caliph and a warlord (Mawerdi, 1982, pp. 59–70). Now that nation-states are constituted on the basis of territorial contiguity, there remains only faith to unite Muslims, as it does Jews, Christians, and the followers of other, non-monotheistic religions, all spread among internationally sovereign countries.

In truth, Islam is a religion and not truly an identity, since many countries are Muslim without sharing a single identity—unless you reduce cultural and national identity to religion as identified by immutable traits. In short, it is absolutely necessary to teach students that Islam is neither a homeland nor a national identity and that it has changed over history.

Arab Unity

Something similar applies to the idea of Arab unity. With the creation of the *Ba'ath* Party in 1941 by a group of revolutionaries gathered around Michel Aflaq, and again with Nasser's accession to power in Egypt on a pan-Arab platform in 1952, Arab unity became a key political goal in many parts of the Arab world. But unity has proved elusive. Ba'athism and Nasserism failed to forge an alliance in the late 1950s, and the Ba'ath states of Iraq and Syria became bitter regional rivals. The Gulf War of 1991 revealed Arab unity to be a fiction, an ideology that has masked the reality of authoritarian power founded on *raison d'etat*.

In fact, the Arab world is made up of sovereign nations, some completely constituted, others in the process of formation. These nations have separate interests. Under the circumstances, even the most enthusiastic partisans of Arab unity have to admit that such a goal is remote.

In other words, it is necessary to teach students that the really imperative goal is multiform Arab cooperation and the modernization of nation-states whose independent existence is no longer subject to dispute.

Does this mean that one must banish the teaching of Arab identity from Arab schools? Surely not. Teachers cannot erase the feeling of belonging to a wider ethnic community. What education should do is suggest to the student by means of concrete examples how culture is constructed and how its meaning varies throughout history.

The history of classical Islam is from this viewpoint rich in lessons. Its "medieval identity," a source of pride, is the result of the mixing of various influences: Persian literature, Greek wisdom, the transmission of the divine word, and the translation of the Ancients that Muslims owed to the Jews and the Christians. Medieval authors like Tawhidi and Miskawayh eulogized this mixing. In an unequaled humanist vein, they sought in it what the Greeks called "the excellent man" and what classical Arabs called "the perfect man" (*al-insan ak-kamil*).

Language

In all Arab countries, teaching is done essentially in Arabic and, secondarily, depending on the country and the discipline, in English or in French. Some countries do this out of necessity, in order to have access to the sciences, and others by cultural choice, so as to know foreign cultures. In fact, language is more than a tool; it is a means of knowing oneself and others.

Nevertheless, language being somehow linked with identity, the question of the place of Arabic is often charged with passion, especially because in certain Arab countries, mathematics, physics, and the natural sciences are taught in a foreign language. Some complain of the marginalization of Arabic, and others fear that if scientific disciplines are taught in Arabic, it will lower the level of teaching. In order to remove some heat from the debate, one must definitively assert the privileged place of Arabic as a national language and recognize the important place of foreign languages as a fundamental means of knowing the world. Happily, apart from "fundamentalists" of a single language (whether Arabic or foreign), the consensus on this point is established.

Between Islamic Tradition and Civil Religion

The teaching of religion poses real problems. First, should one teach Islam at school, or proclaim the neutrality of the state in this respect and leave to parents' discretion the issue of whether to teach their children themselves or send them to private religious schools? Second, if the public schools choose to teach Islam, how should they go about doing so? The answer to the first question is sociological, and to the second it is intellectual or philosophical.

Should public schools teach Islam?

Our preference would be for the public school to desist from teaching the precepts and dogmas of Islam. But this solution seems to suit societies that have accomplished the historical process of secularization. Such societies have passed from the "mechanical solidarity" derived from similitude to the "organic solidarity" derived from the division of labor (Durkheim, 1994), or from a "community" defined by solidarity to a "society" defined by competing interests (Weber, 1995, p. 65).

Most Arab societies, unfortunately, have not completed the historical process of secularization. They are "societies of the Book," still in transition.

Two extreme cases demonstrate the difficult relation between public education and religious education: Turkey and the Indian school of *Dar Uloom* of Deoband.[17]

In choosing to enshrine secularism in the constitution and empowering the military to safeguard it, Turkey has ceded the teaching of religion to

private schools. Between 1982 and 1992, 5,000 Koranic schools were created in Turkey, as opposed to 270 secular ones. On the recommendation of the Council of Security, entrusted with watching over Turkey's secular constitution, the teaching of religion became obligatory in public schools (Jéro, 2002). The result: Turkey has been caught up in the Islamization of a portion of the elite formed in these schools, helping to create support for the *Party of Justice and Development* of Recept Tayyip Erdogan, which won the legislative elections of November 2002.

The school of Deoband meanwhile contributed to the advent of the Taliban (Rashid, 2001, pp. 196–206). After Indian independence, private religious schools were left untouched by the secular state. When Pakistan separated from India in 1947, Abdul Haq, a former student of Deoband, founded a school of similar religious tendencies near Peshawar on the border of Afghanistan. This is where the Taliban would learn the most retrograde Islam—which they would apply in Afghanistan.

As a result, the 100,000 private *madrasa* (religious schools) that exist in modern day India have become subject to suspicion. And in Pakistan, after having been integrated in the formal educational system in 1980/1981, some 20,000 religious *madrasa*, supported by public money coming through zakat funds set up by the government in 1980 (about 10 percent of the alms collected by public agencies are devoted to religious education) are becoming subject to scrutiny. After September 11th, General Musharraf called for a new reform, in order to increase control over the clergy as a part of the war against terrorism (Malik, 2002, pp. 20–21). Whether or not the state takes charge of religious education, in practice both pre-school institutions (the family) and post-school ones (the social milieu, custom, religious parties, private schools) have a tendency to compensate for any weakness of the secularized state. This is what happens in the immigrant Muslim communities in the West: although they go to public schools, the children of the second generation are deeply attached to their traditional religion as interpreted by non-professionals or traditionalist jurists or ulemas.

Hence our answer to the first question: it is prudent and reasonable for Arab states to take charge of religious education; indeed, experience shows that it is dangerous and counter-productive for the public school to abandon religious education to other social actors.

How should Islam be taught?

Within the religious domain we propose making the following distinctions: worship, dogmas, virtues, and social relations. This fourfold distinction is governed by two principles: the principle of respect that liberalism owes to *all* religions and the principle of tolerance applied to the reading of Scripture. In effect, liberalism is not "indifferent." Inasmuch as it accepts cultural, religious, and metaphysical pluralism and the diversity of interpretations, so it promotes a liberal approach to understanding Scripture.

This is what Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, and Kant accomplished in the West. And this is what certain Muslim intellectuals (of whom we will speak in a later section of this chapter) are trying to do in the Arab world today. Liberalism "modified" for an Islamic context allows reconciliation between the universal claims of liberalism and the culture of Islam, between the requirements of modernity and the teaching of Islamic tradition.

Worship

As concerns worship, Islam rests on five pillars: the profession of faith, prayer, fasting, mandatory alms, and pilgrimage to Mecca. These are "personal duties," private obligations (*fardh 'yan*) that every Muslim should render, *ut singuli*, as a sign of obedience, strictly in relation to God. It would be normal to continue teaching them in classic fashion.

Dogma

The same is true of the metaphysical aspects and questions of dogma (belief in God, his kingdom, purgatory, eternal bliss. . .). Public education is charged with teaching them in a traditional way, while advancing (as we shall see) an external and historical critique as well as promoting liberal exegeses of Scripture.

We propose, however, that both worship and dogma be taught tolerantly, according to the principles of Lockean liberalism. In effect, on both issues (*cultus* and *credenda*), Locke demanded "absolute tolerance." A Magistrate cannot force subjects either to worship or to believe (Locke, 1992, p. 105 et seq.). A related idea expressed by John Rawls in *Political Liberalism* is that political liberalism is also philosophical, and therefore it extends tolerance into philosophical and metaphysical debates. To safeguard such tolerance, worship should be regarded as a private matter, in the sense that the state is not accountable for the performance of these duties; in addition, the state, while protecting the right of believers to worship, will not punish those who neither believe nor worship.

Unfortunately, the liberal principle of "unconditional and unlimited tolerance" is hard to apply in practice in most Arab countries, due to the popularity of Islam, and the various sociological pressures that result from being a "society of the Book." The state is often torn between liberalism and popular religious demands. For example, it faces hard choices about closing public places during Ramadan, and about forbidding the consumption of alcohol.

At this level, the choice in Islamic countries is not between "absolute tolerance" and "zero tolerance" but between two other modes: "conditional tolerance" and "the primacy of public good over tolerance." Conditional tolerance, according to Locke, is extended to beliefs and practices that do not threaten security and the public good. But while certain beliefs and practices

may be left to the discretion of citizens, others should not. For example, a right to polygamy (which Locke considered should benefit from conditional tolerance) is incompatible with a conception of public good governed by sexual equality. This should also be the case in Islamic countries. Specifically, in this case "public interest must prevail over tolerance." (In fact, apart from Turkey and Tunisia, most Arab states still allow polygamy.)

Virtues

The same considerations should guide the domain of moral virtues. The state has no business worrying about the salvation of souls. Still, it should teach such virtues as loyalty, generosity, courage, love of neighbor, peace, and good works. Without a respect for such virtues, social life is given over to evil. Thus it is desirable to teach Arab values, what tradition calls the "chivalric virtues" (*makarem al-akhlaq*) such as honor, respect for promises made, courage, pride, hospitality, etc., and which the great Orientalist Goldziher has compared to Jewish Noachim law, and to the Latin *vertus* (Goldziher, 1976, I, pp. 11–14). The public schools should also teach the humanist values of Islam: magnanimity, love, compassion, mutual aid, and peace (Boisard, 1979).

The moral duty to "enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong" has to be managed with prudence. Although this duty is of Koranic origin (3:104), it is according to tradition a collective duty (*fardh kifaya*). This means that the individual is absolved of it as long as the community represented by the public authority accomplishes it instead. If the duty to forbid what is wrong is taught, then the schools run the risk of pushing young people to conclude that a perceived failure of the public authority to uphold this duty obliges them to render justice themselves, or else proclaim themselves communitarian judges.

Different challenges are posed by the teaching of two other collective duties in Islamic tradition: the duty to seek knowledge, and the duty of *jihad*.

The first is established by the Koran (7:185, 69:2) and confirmed by the tradition of the Prophet's enjoining of scientific research. Teachers can easily show how the community fulfills the duty to know through public schooling. At the same time, the duty to seek knowledge has become individual and universal in modern societies. Here Arab educators may cite the first pages of the *Decisive Treatise* of Averroés (1126–1198) in which the philosopher, after having established that "Revelation declares obligatory the examination of beings," deduces that this examination is best made through the "demonstrative syllogism" of philosophy, the science of sciences in his day (Averroés, 1996, § 3–5).

When it comes to *jihad*, teachers should show how its lexical root signifies "to make an effort." *Jihad* is not holy war but rather, on a personal level, an effort to combat one's natural penchants and inclinations. In fact, textual interpretation can show that the "great *jihad*" is the struggle to master oneself and that only the "small *jihad*" refers to war (Abu Zahra, 1962;

Hamidullah, 1968). The pacific spirit of *jihad* properly understood should extend to knowledge of others, and teaching should foster peace and fraternity among peoples of all countries. The educator should insist on the fact that war has been banned in modern international relations, and the Islamic states, being members of the United Nations, uphold the right only to legitimate defense in the case of aggression. An assigned reading of the Charter of the United Nations would show that recourse to war is forbidden.

Finally, in the last years of public schooling, educators should show how Koranic virtues belong to the order of belief, and not to the order of knowledge. The difference is based on the fact that beliefs cannot be proved except through rhetoric; belief rests on faith, not facts. Knowing presupposes true understanding according to the protocols of science. The teacher would reassure the students, though, by insisting that the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are beliefs that are necessary for the realization of the sovereign good as the goal of the moral life. They are, as Kant said, "postulates of reason," plausible hypotheses, but grounded only in moral duty, which in turn is based on the autonomy of practical reason, which at the level of action imperatively prescribes what is to be done or not done, notably to act in such a way that we are all free (Kant, 1985, IV & V).

Social Relations

Arab educators should approach social relations according to the principle of freedom. On this theme, we have one of the rare cases in which classical Islam is perfectly in accord with liberalism. Islam promotes contractual freedom of property, of buying and selling, and of movement; it possesses legal mechanisms that guarantee the security of economic and commercial transactions.

It would be fortunate if public education stressed freedom of enterprise, and showed that social relations (unlike religious duties) are subject to evolution. For example, while a rate of interest was forbidden in the classical age, the requirements of modern life render necessary recourse to a banking system based on a notion of investment, dividends, and interest.

In summary, we propose that both worship and dogmas be taught according to tradition, but combined with principles that promote tolerance; that the virtues, despite their religious roots, be taught as public duties under the aegis of the state's authority; and, finally, that social relations obey the principle of freedom consecrated by classical Islam and modern liberalism. We also suggest that teachers present religion as a matter of faith at the outset, deferring a critical exposition until later years, so as not to disorient young children who need time to form their personal ideas of faith.

Reconciling Religion with Human Rights

How can we reconcile the need to teach religion with the fact that society is founded largely on the principles of abstract and secular humanism, or

on convention and a social pact freely consented to by free and equal social partners? If liberalism has been adapted to Islam, it is because of the new interpretations of the Koran offered by a variety of Arab reformers (Charfi, 2001; Redissi, 2004).

Among the founders of modern Islam, authors such as the Egyptians R. Rifaat Tahtaoui (1801–1873), Qacem Amin (1863–1908), Mohamed Abduh (1849–1905), Ali Abderrazak (1888–1966), and Taha Hussein (died 1973) and the Tunisians Kherredine (1810–1879), Ibn Dhiaf (1803–1877), and Tahar Haddad (died 1935) ought to find a significant place in school-books.[18] The work of the Moderns in Islam raises three questions for us that are at the heart of the re-reading of Scripture: (a) religious tolerance; (b) secularization; and (c) sexual equality. These issues should accompany a reform of education in (d) human rights.

Tolerance

In classical Islam, the world was divided into three realms: that of Islam (the world of *sharîa* and justice), that of war (the impious world of anomie), and that of reconciliation (the world of non-aggression). Inside the Islamic world Islamic law prevailed, but the *dhimmis,* those protected by Islamic law,[19] could keep their beliefs and their jurisdiction. They benefited from protection conditional upon payment of a personal poll tax (Qur'an 9:29).

In the modern age, equality was established in principle between Muslims and non-Muslims: equality before the law, equality with respect to taxes, and equality with respect to military service. This was a major achievement of the Turkish reforms of 1839 (Khatt Sherif) and 1858 (Khatt Humayum) and the Fundamental Pact ('Ahd al-Amen) in Tunisia (1857).

Three principles should be conveyed in teaching: belief is a private matter; prophecy is not a warrant for domination; and compulsion cannot produce religious belief. There are textual and historical precedents for all of these principles in Islam. The Koranic verses that personalize belief, make it a private matter, are as follows: "O ye who believe! Ye have charge of your own souls. He who erreth cannot injure you if we are rightly guided" (5:105); "Whosoever goeth right, it is only for (the good of) his own soul that he goeth right, and whosoever erreth, erreth only to its hurt. No laden soul can bear another's load" (17:15). Other verses affirm that the Prophet cannot force people to believe; at the most, he has the duty to warn them: "Remind them, for thou art but a remembrancer, Thou art not at all a warder over them" (88:21–22). Such a constraint arises from the absolute divine will: "If the Lord willed, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wouldst thou (Muhammad) compel men until they are believers? It is not for any soul to believe save by the permission of Allah" (10:99–101). Still other Koranic verses suggest the limits of coercion in matters of faith: "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256); regarding those who think otherwise, "reason with them in the better way" (16:125).

Secularization

The classical theory of power in Islam was that of the Caliphate, also called *imamat* (guidance). It was founded on the idea that the caliph, which etymologically means successor, "deputized for prophetics in the safeguarding of religion and the administration of earthly interests" (Mawerdi, 1982, p. 5). The Caliph (or Prince) applied the *sharîa* but possessed all earthly power. Then, in the nineteenth century, the question arose of whether power ought to be secularized. Reformers set themselves the task of showing that Islam did not confuse the temporal and the spiritual and that it was able to adapt to the modern age. Tunisians like Ibn Dhiaf and Kherredine did so in a way that today could be criticized, but at the time was very suitable. The former, author of the *Fundamental Pact* (1857), in his *Chronicle of the Kings of Tunis* (1873) classified political regimes into three categories: "republican power," "despotic power," and "power limited by the law." Neither the first nor second corresponds to Islam, which is as much against the power of the masses as against despotism. Only a monarchic power tempered by the law wins the adherence of Ibn Dhiaf ([1873] 1963, vol. 1, pp. 6–77). Kherredine, prime minister and great reformer, in his *Essays on the Reforms Necessary for Muslim States* ([1867] 1987), pleads for the need to borrow modern institutions from Westerners. He says, in effect, that borrowing is wisdom (*hikma*). The possible objections are the same as those used today by adversaries of the modernization of education: the opposition between modern institutions and the principle of religious law, the ignorance and incapacity of the masses to assimilate them (Kherredine, [1867] 1987, 133 ff). "Any enlightened man," he says, "can see that these objections have no foundation" (pp. 135–136). Reforms are "compatible with the provisions of our sharia, religious law" since the ideas of liberty and justice are "the fundamental basis of our religious Law" (pp. 88, 93). In support of this proposition, a panoply of proofs is solicited: the *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet), texts from jurisconsults, the historical experience of good caliphs and virtuous princes.

In Egypt, similar work was done by Abduh and refined by Ali Abdherazak. In a series of famous articles published in 1898 and later compiled under the title *Al-Islam, dîn al-'ilm wa al-madaniyya* (*Islam, Religion of Science and Modern Civilization*), Abduh makes a division between faith and politics. Belief in God and in his unity, he says, can only be acquired through "rational proof," which arises from the "natural order" (*al-tabîa*). Islam, he thinks, has never known a fusion of the temporal and the spiritual. Islamic Law has conferred upon the Caliph the management of human affairs, nothing more. Power, if you will, is *ab initio* civil. But how can one articulate the relation between power and religion, the affairs of this world and those of the next?

Abduh enunciates a few principles:

- The use of reason to obtain belief; here reason is an instrument (*wassila*) and a proof (*hujja*).
- The primacy of reason over the letter of the Koran. This means that in cases of incompatibility between reason and the tradition recorded by the doctors of the Law (*naql*), the former takes precedence.
- The refusal of the *takfir* (accusation of nonbelief). Abduh enunciates the principle that if proffered speech is liable to lead to unbelief in a hundred possible cases and to be taken in a single instance in a sense compatible with Islam, then one should prefer the single case in question over the hundred inquisitory interpretations.
- The "overturning" (*qalb*) of religious power, which means that Islam "has destroyed" (*hadama*) this type of power for the sake of a direct relation between God and his creatures without an intermediary.
- Tolerance: If Christianity is a religion of tolerance according to St. Matthew's Gospel (5:39–40), Islam equally enjoins magnanimity (*samâaha*), amnesty (*'afwu*), and friendship (*mawadda*) with people of other religions and a rejection of excess (*ghuluw*) in religious matters (Abduh, 1978, vol. 3, pp. 243–350).

Abduh's innovative interpretation was radicalized in 1926 by his disciple Ali Abd al-Raziq, who argued that political power is part of social relations and not of dogma. Mohammed was a prophet like Moses and Jesus, and not a political leader; the theory of the caliphate is not Koranic; and finally, the Koran does not prescribe any particular form of government, and so Muslims are free today to choose the system of government that suits the modern age (Abd al-Raziq, [1926] 1994). This thesis would be refined and developed by others (Charfi, 1996, p. 28; Filaly-Ansary, 1997, pp. 110–148; Charfi, 1998, pp. 157–202, Redissi, 1998, pp. 93–123).

It is of the highest importance to explain to the young that the Koran imposes no determined form of political organization; the Caliphate is a human institution that the first Muslims adopted precisely in the absence of clear and irrefutable Koranic indications about the nature of power. And it is necessary to explain to them that power in the classical age was authoritarian and that today nothing prevents power from being organized according to democratic norms.

Sexual Equality

In the classical age, inequality between women and men was a normative social fact. Women were considered inferior in physical state and also as "lacking in reason and religion." The legal code included a host of discriminatory provisions benefiting men, some of Koranic origin and others customary: a right to polygamy, the man's right to repudiate a marriage

unilaterally, a ban on a Muslim woman marrying a non-Muslim man, wedding ceremonies performed in the woman's name by her guardian, the primacy of the husband in the home and in practically all matters relating to it, and the veiling of women in public.

In the nineteenth century, Arab reformers began quietly to criticize such discrimination against women. The Egyptian Tahtawi (1801–1873) wrote a large book titled *Al-morshed al-amin li al al-banat wal banin* (*Guide for the Education of Girls and Boys*) in which he pleaded, among other things, for the right of girls to receive a basic education (Tahtawi, 1972, vol. 2, pp. 271–767). Thirty years later, Qacem Amin (1863–1908), a spokesman for women's liberation, went farther in two books, *Al-mara'a al-jadida* (*The New Woman*) and *Tahrir al-maraa (Liberation of Women)*, recognizing a woman's right to unveil herself and to go to work (Amin, 1976).

A decisive stage was reached by the Tunisian Tahar al-Haddad (died 1935), whose book *Imraatuna fi al-sharia wa al-mujtama'* (*Our Women, Legislation and Society*, 1929) went farthest in the direction of emancipating women. Haddad argued not only for the liberation of women (Haddad, 1978, pp. 149–240) but also for their legal promotion (Haddad, 1978, pp. 21–147). On the social level, he defended an education system that was general, practical, moral, emotional, and physical, as well as the right to work and the suppression of the veil. He vigorously criticized premature marriage of young girls and unions arranged by parents, and the general masculine domination that he imputed to ignorance, to underdevelopment, and to custom. On the legal level, and based on an audacious interpretation of Koranic verses, he grounded the conjugal tie upon the couple's free choice (and not on parental guidance) based on love (not the sexual instinct). He attacked the unilateral right of the husband to repudiate his wife, which he proposed to correct by legal divorce. Finally, he attacked the taboo of polygamy by pointing to the Koranic verse saying that a man can never be equitable among his four legal wives (4:129). Based on this statement in the Koran, the first leader of the independent state of Tunisia, Bourguiba (1903–1999), promulgated in 1956 the Code of Personal Status, which criminalized polygamy, fixed a minimum age for marriage, instituted free consent in marriage and divorce, abolished repudiation, and replaced it with equal right to legal divorce.

With the exception of Turkey and Tunisia, almost all Arab and Islamic countries remain attached to the application of traditional norms. This includes Egypt, despite the intellectual precedents that we have noted. On this matter as many others, the intellectual bases and the work of interpretation do in fact exist for a moral reform of Islamic society—only the political will is lacking.

If the latter were manifested and the theoretical support made available, it could be translated into the school by providing obligatory schooling of girls and boys mixed together in classrooms, and also by teaching equality of the sexes.

Education in Human Rights

One of the school's duties is to prepare children to integrate into society through education for citizenship according to the norms of the modern, liberal, and secular state. From this perspective, civic education is an essential subject that should be made completely independent of religious education.

Students should be made familiar with the rules of how a modern state functions: local and regional administration, separation of powers, an independent judicial system, relations between executive and legislative branches, and the principles and voting methods of elections. Students should also be taught the values on which democratic states are founded: the fundamental principle of equality and nondiscrimination among human beings and in particular between men and women, the principal individual and collective freedoms, the rights and duties of a citizen. Finally, civic education should stress the idea of historicity, that is to say, the evolution of ideas and institutions across different historical eras and in different regions of the world.

Thus the pupil would discover that the only legitimacy worthy of the name is democratic and that the history of humanity is, in a certain manner and as a whole, the history of an evolution from pre-modern forms (primitive, authoritarian, theocratic, etc.) to democracy: in other words, the shift from an absolute power that asserts its ownership of truth to a power that leaves the absolute to each person's conscience and governs in realms of the relative where contestation is permitted, pluralism is practicable, and pacific alternance is possible.

And so humanity arrived (on December 10, 1948) at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a text that should be read, explicated, and commented upon in all schools. This was the case in the reform of education that took place in Tunisia where each year, on this date, schoolteachers explain to students the principles and value of this founding text.

This "direct" teaching of the principles of democracy and human rights should be accompanied by the "indirect" teaching of these principles. It is fundamental that the choice of texts for all subjects in the humanities be oriented in this direction—since no choice in any subject matter can pretend to innocence. The choice of written and visual materials to illustrate books designed for children in primary schools is important. For example, images of boys and girls playing together or of the father and mother performing the same tasks, both noble and banal, habituate students to the idea of women's emancipation and sexual equality. By contrast, the image of an educated and active father and of an ignorant mother confined to housework normalizes a masculine, patriarchal, and misogynistic society.

This pedagogy about equality of the sexes is necessary not only in the curriculum and textbooks: life inside the teaching establishment should be

based on coeducation. In the Arab world these days most schools are single sex. It is imperative to put an end to this segregation so as to suppress any inferiority or superiority complex by reason of sex and in order to foster healthy and natural relations between the girls and boys of today, the women and men of tomorrow.

But all this does not mean that the teaching establishment should become ideological. The liberal school cannot permit this. Quite the contrary, in the promotion of the ideas of liberty, equality, democracy, and human rights, the school should present all theories, all doctrines, in harmony with the principle of pluralism that characterizes liberalism. This diversity will teach the young to recognize themselves in some ideas and to relativize others; it will help them to acquire the critical spirit and will foster in each the formation of his or her personality.

Conditions for the Application of Reform

An ambitious reform such as the one advocated here presupposes that certain conditions of effectiveness will be filled. We regard three conditions as especially important: the proper teaching of modern science; the proper training of teachers; and promoting a broader culture of critical pluralism.

Although the matter does not seem to relate directly to religion and human rights, the teaching of science matters a great deal in Islamic countries because most Islamists boast of having scientific training, to the point that they are nicknamed "PhDs with beards." Now, everything depends on how the sciences are taught. A good reform of the education system should aim to overhaul not only the humanities but also change methods of teaching the "exact sciences" so that the young truly understand the nature of physical, chemical, and biological phenomena. Theories that are often considered taboo, such as the Big Bang or human evolution, should be broached and explained.

A school of knowledge is also a school of criticism in which the student will discover that scholars have progressed by trial and error, by posing hypotheses and having doubts, and that scientific truths are often provisional and need to be completed or rectified. In short, the history of scientific truth is strewn with errors and challenges, which does not mean one should contest or reject the possibility of scientific truth, as do certain skeptics.

In general, narrow specialization should be avoided: even if he has learned to solve mathematical equations or use a computer, the Arab scientist today usually has only a summary general culture at best. Only a common syllabus that is as extensive and as little differentiated as possible can avoid the premature specialization that results in training citizens who are expert in the sciences and ignorant in the humanities. Specialization in secondary schools should take place only two years before the baccalaureate, to allow engineers, doctors, and researchers to acquire an appropriate understanding of a general culture that is common to all.

In addition, reform can succeed only if the teachers fully participate in it. In France since the end of the nineteenth century, teachers have been the "Republic's hussars." Because of circumstances of pure historical chance, the Third Republic was installed in 1875 only provisionally, since the population still supported the monarchy. Thanks to the schools, though, in the space of a generation the republican spirit replaced the monarchist spirit among the population. Thanks to the cohesion among the body of teachers and their involvement in a democratic school that was secularized and open to all, the public school went hand in hand with universal suffrage (J. Ozouf, 1993; J. Ozouf & M. Ozouf, 1992). Luc Ferry, the current minister of national education in France, has stated that "there is no democracy except through the school, in other words, democracy grows out of a pedagogy that is democratic" (Ferry and Renaut, 1985, vol. 3, p. 170).

In Arab and Islamic countries, teachers lack uniform training: some have a traditional Muslim training and others a modern Western education; some are monolingual and others bilingual; some have been trained at home, others abroad. As a result, some teachers favor reforms and others do not. Experience shows that the viewpoint supported by the authorities will orient the schools, which means that radical reform will not succeed unless the teachers are aware that an educational policy corresponds to the state's clearly expressed will, especially at the top. Hence the imperative need for states (which are infrequently unitary, but are often led and influenced by diverse elites) to opt publicly for a policy of modernization through the classroom and for them to apply it with the highest vigilance and the greatest vigor, and without the least hesitation.

Finally, while a reform of education policy is important for all Arab and Islamic countries, so is a reform of the broader culture. It is up to intellectuals and artists to do this. Unfortunately, since Arab states dominate the media, government officials also have to assume some responsibility. In many Arab countries, Arabic and Islamic media are only deepening the idealization and sacralization of tradition instead of promoting critical pluralism. Even the private television networks (Al-Jazira, ANN) that were welcomed in the beginning have tended to idealize Islamic tradition. We now know that the policy of promoting Islam in order to cut the ground from under the feet of Islamists has in fact always backfired and served the latter. Cultural policy should be oriented toward wholly free creation, widespread support for intellectuals and artists, and ever greater openness toward universal culture.

THE EXPERIENCE OF REFORM OF CIVIC AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN TUNISIA (1989–1994)

The reform of the educational system in Tunisia introduced by the law of July 28, 1991 was conceived in the spirit we have just sketched, both in its

content and in its practical application. The Tunisian case thus merits careful study.

For didactic reasons, we will first offer a history of reform efforts in Tunisia since the nineteenth century.

The First Reforms

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Tunisia was entering its fourth century of economic and social stagnation. As European nations began to modernize, a new awareness arose of the need to reform Tunisian society. The first reforms were initiated under the reign of the two monarchs Ahmed Bey (1837–1855) and Mohamed Sadok Bey (1859–1882) (Brown, 1974).

In 1840 Bey founded Bardo, a military academy on the Western model that taught cadets foreign languages and the exact sciences. He built a cannon and gunpowder foundry. And new factories appeared: one to manufacture cloth, another to produce leather, a mill for flour powered by a steam engine, and a refinery for oil (1844–1845). A national bank was created in 1847, one of the first in the Arab world. In conjunction with these initiatives, a rationalization of taxation took place, notably with the institution of direct taxes, a lessening in export taxes, the suppression of taxes on certain products (oil, arable land), and certain others collected by regional tax collectors (governors, sheikhs). The Waqfs (religious endowments) were centralized in 1874.

On the legal and political plane, Courts were reorganized and a new penal code implemented. Slavery was abolished between 1842 and 1846. The *'Ahd al-aman,* a sort of declaration of the rights inspired by the Turkish Tanzimat (1839 and 1853), was decreed in 1857; this was followed by a new constitution that limited the power of the monarchy for the first time in the Arab world (1861, suspended in 1864).

These reforms corresponded to the spirit of the times. In particular, the penal code was remarkably modern. For example, article 203 enumerated the range of punishments: the death penalty, forced labor, prison, banishment, and fines—no more corporal punishment. Article 204 stated: "It is forbidden to pronounce punishments other than those permitted in the preceding article and that could involve physical suffering." Apostasy, not covered in the code, was therefore not punishable either. Article 281 legalized the sale of alcoholic beverages, which was to be sanctioned only if they were sold outside specially authorized points of sale. A Prud'homme tribunal charged with arbitrating work conflicts was created (1877). As in Turkey, two educated modernists and men of state played a crucial role in this period, Prime Minister Kehrredine (1810–1877) and Ahmed Ben Dhiaf (1803–1877) (Van Krieken, 1976).

Finally, in the realm of culture, a renaissance occurred, notably with the birth in 1860 of an official press and the first newspaper, *Al râid-attûnisi* (*Tunisian Guide*). Even more important was the creation in 1875 of Sadiki,

a new secondary school. Offering a modern curriculum of classes in the exact sciences, modern languages, and world history, the *lycée* in the years that followed would produce many of the nation's political and cultural leaders (Sraïb, 1995).

While Sadiki attracted many of Tunisia's best and brightest, religious teaching remained unchanged. The country had 1,250 *meddebs* (traditional teachers) in *kouttebs* (private Koranic schools) where only boys were taught the alphabet, elements of Arab grammar, and the Koran. No modern university existed yet. The traditional Islamic university, the Zeitouna, consisted of some 30 to 40 *cheikhs,* religious educators who dispensed both secondary and higher education to nearly a thousand students a year at the end of the nineteenth century. But the level of absenteeism was high and teaching non-obligatory, so that barely three hundred students a year graduated by passing the examination (Ben Achour, 1991, pp. 105–110). Once they had their diplomas, the graduates of Zeitouna tended to become judges in religious courts, notaries, or *imams* in mosques.

The Zeitouna curriculum did not include the exact sciences, mathematics, or engineering. It revolved instead around the study of Islam as a religion and the study of history and law in conformity with traditional interpretations. Teachers expected students to memorize facts and ideas without rational discussion of their premises. Rationalist Muslim theologians like the *mutazilites,* enlightened Arab philosophers like Averroes, and Arab historians of world civilization like Ibn Khaldun were mentioned only to be criticized for their heresies. The pre-Islamic history of Tunisia was ignored, as was the wider history of the world. Except for questions of personal status (marriage, divorce, and inheritance) that related to the expertise of future judges in religious courts, Zeitounian education was disconnected from time and space and scarcely corresponded either to the requirements of modern times or to the evolution of moral standards.

Efforts to reform the traditional religious curriculum invariably failed, because such efforts were opposed by the *ulemas*. At the same time, the popularity of the new Sadiki College produced an elite that was increasingly polarized. On one hand, a growing number of political and intellectual leaders held liberal values and a nationalist political orientation; on the other hand, a substantial number of jurists and clerics who upheld a traditional—and illiberal—understanding of Islam and disdained any direct involvement in politics.

The modernizers directed the development of the nation, successively creating the "Young Tunisians" movement (1911), then the Destour party (Constitution, 1920), and finally the Neo-Destour party (1934), which demanded and led the way to independence. The traditionalists meanwhile controlled the magistracy, and accused the modernizers of Francophony and of idolizing the infidels.

The history of Tunisian society in the final decades before independence may thus be schematically described as a struggle between an urban, secular, modern, and politically active elite (the Sadikians) and a traditional religious and conservative elite that was politically incapable of assuming a constructive leadership role (the Zeitounians).

Independence

Once independence was achieved in 1956, the leaders of the national movement set about trying to modernize the country. We know that the outcome of any modernization depends on the key agents who lead the process of change (Huntington, 1968). In Tunisia, the leaders were secularized intellectuals and civil servants, unlike the scriptural elite in Morocco and the revolutionary elite in Algeria (Henry-Moore, 1970).

After independence, the Sadikians assumed responsibility for foreign affairs, the army, the police, the national guard, agriculture, industry, public works, communications, and public health. Lacking political and technical competence, the Zeitounians were relegated to subsidiary functions. Marginalized, they became restive. In response, the new government hired Zeitounians in large numbers to staff courts and schools. The judges and teachers were expected to ratify the reforms of the modernizers; in fact, they became a chronic source of opposition to such reforms.

In the first months of independence, the government instituted a new legal code. It criminalized polygamy, instituted civil marriage, fixed a minimum age for marriage, legalized adoption, sanctioned divorce, and outlawed spousal repudiation. Judges with a traditional education were asked to apply this new code. They did so—but whenever there was room for interpretation, they applied traditional Muslim norms. As a result, family law in Tunisia to this day suffers from a contradiction between a modern legal code and its traditional interpretation by judges trained in the traditional way. Matters are further complicated by the growing power in lower courts of judges trained in secular law faculties.

After independence, education became obligatory, free, and coeducational for both sexes from the age of six. Public education generally followed the example of the Sadiki curriculum. Arabic was taught alongside French in primary schools, and English in secondary schools. Classes in the exact sciences were introduced. The various humanities curricula (philosophy, history, geography, civics, and religious studies) were fixed according to modern standards. Yet, at the same time, Zeitounian graduates were recruited to teach Islam, Arab history, and the Arabic language. As a result, schooling in Tunisia to this day suffers from a chronic tension between the modern parts of the curriculum, which are taught by secularists, and the more traditional components of education, which are generally taught by religiously trained teachers in as traditional a spirit as possible.

Crisis and Reaction

The end of the 1960s witnessed instability in the education sector, following a crisis in Tunisia's political life. The reasons for the turmoil cannot be fully recounted here, but they included the institutionalization of a single party (1963), the cult of personality around the head of state, Bourguiba, and the authoritarian imposition of socialism (1963) (Camau, 1998).

The secular and progressive intelligentsia organized itself into a movement called "Perspectives" after the title of its clandestine paper published between 1962 and 1968, before a portion of its leadership became taken with ideas of the extreme Left and adhered to the international Maoism then in vogue in Europe. In response, the regime committed a double error. The political mistake was that it resorted to harsh measures to rebuff the demand for the democratization of political life (arrests, mass trials, heavy prison sentences, torture). The second mistake was cultural: to counterbalance the vogue for far Leftist ideas among the young, a decision was taken at the highest level to "re-Islamicize" education.

The Islamists in the 1970s were a small group of traditionalists who had already been socialized in an Islamicized public school but were sufficiently opportunistic to avoid attacking the regime head-on by contesting the cult of personality or by challenging the single party and economic policies. At the moment when democratic opposition was repressed, starting in 1972, the Islamicists and their associates became authorized to spread their ideas in their own newspapers such as *Al-Maarifa* (Knowledge), *Jawhar al-Islam* (Essence of Islam) and *Al-Mujtama* (Society). Gradually, a tacit alliance (sometimes explicit) was forged between the traditionalists and the men in power: pan-Arabists, reactionaries, and clumsy politicians. The social gamble was to make Tunisia into a politically authoritarian country in their hands, and a culturally conservative country in the hands of the Islamists.

The latter infiltrated the structures of public education. By successive strokes, they radicalized still more the Islamization of the school curriculum. In return, the Islamized school multiplied the recruitment of militants. Finally, the Islamicists, from a simple Association for the Safeguarding of the Koran in 1971, enthusiastic about the Iranian revolution they had welcomed, were transformed into a political party, the Islamic Tendency Movement in 1979.

Between 1970 and 1975, several Islamizing reforms affected the education system. First, there was an impromptu decision at the beginning of the 1970s to teach in Arabic the subjects of philosophy and history, which until then had been taught in French. No doubt such a decision was legitimate, but taken in haste and politically motivated to counter the Marxist Left. It meant that all the foreign visiting professors were fired; thus, bilingual teachers with modern training were marginalized or quit teaching because they were required to teach their courses in Arabic within the space of a few weeks. They were replaced by less qualified teachers (with secondary school

diplomas or the *bac* plus one year), who were either former Zeitounians or graduates of universities in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. Both of these groups were sympathetic to pan-Arab and Islamicist ideologies.

These changes would have consequences for the respective status of philosophy, civic education, and religious education—three separate disciplines in Tunisia. Until 1970, philosophy was a principal subject and was taught in French alongside Islamic philosophy. After 1970, Islamic philosophy absorbed general philosophy and took on aspects of an anti-modern and anti-liberal medieval theology. The religious education that had been marginalized was now valued again. For political reasons—to mobilize the traditionalists against the liberals on the eve of a congress of the single party, Monastir II, in 1974—the High Council of National Education gathered urgently to decide on doubling classroom time for Islamic education. Teachers of religious education were also charged with providing courses in civic education, although it was a subject totally foreign to their specialty—and this would in turn augment their influence over the youth. The schedule of religious education was de facto tripled.

Finally, the content of the curriculum was sharply revised. Language textbooks used religious examples to illustrate grammatical rules. In the teaching of philosophy, non-Muslim philosophers were flatly ignored or else caricatured in a sentence, and dismissed as miscreants (e.g., Bertrand Russell) or Zionists (Jean-Paul Sartre). Students were even instructed to avoid reading their books.[20]

The two rival systems of communism and capitalism were criticized in favor of the "best economic and social system," namely Islam. Muslim philosophers, who were known as Universalist and to be enlightened, were marginalized in favor of the theosophical school of Ghazali (died 1111), whose members had violently criticized "pure" philosophers such as Farabi (872–950) and Averroes (1126–1198). In the teaching of French and English, the reading of classics by Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Locke disappeared in favor of an instrumental approach to language, according to which a foreign language is simply a tool for mastering the sciences. The discipline of civic education, emptied of its substance, was transformed into a second course of religious education, its content purged of all reference to human rights, the rule of law, or democracy.

Consequently, young Tunisians schooled in this period scarcely knew about Hannibal, were ignorant of the works and even existence of the Tunisian Saint Augustine, and considered as foreign any history prior to the Islamic conquest. The latter was presented in a triumphalist and emotional manner to the point that, for example, the glorious resistance of the Berber leader Kahena and his troops to the Arab invasion were, if not kept quiet, then at least presented in an almost shameful manner. For the later period, the history of Tunisia itself was swallowed up in that of the Islamic empire. The whole reform movement of the nineteenth century was ignored.

In the teaching of values, the revival of traditionalism in the curriculum proved even more catastrophic. Corporal punishments reappeared in textbooks that went so far as to declare that anyone who denies one of the pillars of Islam, the obligation to say prayers, is an apostate.[21] The equality between the sexes instituted by the legal code was ignored, and children were taught that the husband has the right to repudiate his spouse without legal divorce, and that he may if necessary administer a punishment to her,[22] in defiance of the law that penally sanctions the perpetrator of such an infraction. The republic was unfavorably compared with caliphate. Democracy was criticized as a Western doctrine foreign to Arab civilization[23] and a form of government hostile to Islamic religion.[24] In international relations, the duty of jihad was taught alongside the right to reduce prisoners of war to slavery.[25]

In short, the schools of Tunisia functioned between 1970 and 1989 as a breeding ground for radical Islamists.

Reform (1989–1994)

On October 1, 1989, the Minister of National Education, Mohamed Charfi, presented the outlines of a frankly modernizing reform of education.[26] The Islamists accused the minister of wanting to "dry up the springs" of Islamism. A fierce public debate ensued—though ultimately the reformers prevailed.

The reform as a whole was meant to harmonize the relation between the state, society, and education. It divided education into two cycles: the first, basic, lasting nine years, and the second lasting four. It instituted a common core curriculum lasting two years, in hopes of avoiding a polarization of graduates, premature specialization, and the production of "PhDs with beards," scientists competent in research but reactionaries on a cultural level.

An education law of July 29, 1991, ratified the new plan. In the remainder of this chapter, we discuss three key aspects of the reform, and how it has changed the teaching of identity, modernity, and citizenship.

Identity

The first article of the education law affirmed the goal of "consolidating awareness of the Tunisian national identity and of belonging to Maghrebin, Arabic, and Islamic civilization." This is not a denial of the cosmopolitan spirit. No educational system can ignore the insertion of the young into a natural community. But the nature of this community is hardly self-evident. Thus, the reform developed knowledge of the first thousand years of Tunisian history, especially the Carthaginian and Roman heritage (Hannibal, St. Augustine, Apuleius). A visit to the National Museum was required to familiarize students with the idea that the nation is rooted in several civilizations.

In matters of religion and law, the reform sought to prepare students "for a life that leaves no place for any form of discrimination or segregation

based on sex, social origin, race, or religion" (art.1, al. 3). It aimed to incul-
cate instead "values of tolerance and moderation" (art. 1, al. 6). At the
same time, both metaphysical questions (the existence of God, prophecy)
and worship or religious duties (the five pillars of Islam) were to be taught
in classical fashion, "adapted" to the subject of religious education in the
first years of primary school.

In later years, students were to be introduced to the idea of religious
toleration. For example, lesson 3–4 of the seventh-year basic text for reli-
gious education stresses the common values of the monotheistic religions.
A table in the text compares the injunctions of the Koran with the Ten
Commandments, and a genealogical tree illustrates the narrative of the
kinship between Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed through their common
ancestor, Abraham—and hence the common origin of Judaism, Christi-
anity, and Islam. Students also become aware of the spirit of reform that
has animated Islam in Tunisia and elsewhere in the Arab world since the
nineteenth century.

Finally, both Muslim and Western modernists are part of the civics cur-
riculum. Their approaches are explained to allow students to reconcile the
writers' ideals and their own reality. For example, the textbook of the eighth
year is devoted to religious thought. It is divided into four parts; the first deals
with historical foundations of religious thought. The second treats renewal
and reform through the writings of contemporary reformers (the Egyptians
R. R. Tahtawi and M. Abduh, the Yemenite A. b. A. Shoukani, the Syrian
Kawakbi, the Moroccans A. Fassi and M. A. Lahbabi, the Algerian A. Ben
Badis, the Tunisians Kherredine, A. Ibn Dhiaf, General Hussein, T. Ben
Achour, etc.). The third part deals with "Islam and Christianity" through
the seminal text by Abduh, which we have mentioned as criticizing religious
fanaticism (Abduh, 1978). And the fourth part explicates some Koranic rules
based on verses: speak with moderation, verify sources of information, search
for peace, man is a social being by nature, faith is conviction and rational
examination and action. Currently, of 135 authors studied in religious educa-
tion, 111 are contemporary, 6 date from the nineteenth century, and 18 are
ancient.[27] The timetable of religious education is 1.5 hours per week, which is
much less than in other Arab countries.

In addition, the theological university of Zeitouna has been reformed.
A 1995 decree fixed its goal as realizing a balance between belonging to
Islamic civilization and the requirements of life (arts. 1–4). Its courses
have been revised so that the future theologian also masters "the different
branches of modern knowledge that allow him to accede directly to the
products of the universal spirit" (art. 4).

Modernity

The education law of July 29, 1991, balances teaching about belonging to spe-
cific communities with "openness to modernity and to human civilization"

(art. 1). The new curriculum also insured there would be no more dissociation of scientific training from the broadening of minds. It insisted on the notion of parity: students should be equally educated "in the sciences" and "in moral, cognitive, affective, and practical" matters (art. 8). Specialization was to be delayed. Along with Arabic, the official language (art. 4), the student was required to learn French starting in the third primary year (for nine years), French and English in the eighth year of the same school, and had an option to take a third language (German, Spanish, or Italian).

Openness to universal civilization presupposes a knowledge of world history, geography, and philosophy. The curriculum re-established the traditional balance in the study of philosophy, dividing it into themes as follows: what philosophy is, the body, language, consciousness and unconsciousness, instincts and institutions, visions of the world. This curriculum was integrated with the science and math baccalaureate, where stress was put on scientific rationality and the social sciences. Each philosophical theme was to be illustrated by the main schools of philosophy from Greece to the modern day. For example, under the heading of instincts and institutions, there is one text of Islamic thought (from the sociologist Ibn Khaldûn) among nineteen selections, and under "visions of the world", three texts among twenty-eight (Ghazali, Farabi, and the writer Abdelkebir Khatibi).

Citizenship

A self that is simultaneously situated and open-minded should be cosmopolitan in the Kantian sense of the word. Here the reform aimed to foster an interest in political and human rights. The teaching of civics was dissociated from religious education (of which it had been part) and given autonomy in the faculty of letters and social sciences, in hopes of encouraging some students to become teachers of civics themselves. The new curriculum included the following elements: administration, separation of powers, elections, equality and nondiscrimination between sexes and peoples, individual and collective freedoms, rights and duties of citizenship including fiscal ones, the individual, civil society, popular sovereignty, modern political regimes, the history of political regimes, etc. The intention is clear: to show that history is a gradual evolution from theocracy to democracy and from authoritarianism to pluralism.

CONCLUSION

The Tunisian example proves that a constructive reform of education is possible in the Arab world, at least under the right circumstances.

In Tunisia in 1989, reform was supported by the state at the highest level and by a majority of the population. It was implemented only after wide consultation among relevant stakeholders. Its application was administered by a broadly constituted commission, itself divided into commissions grouping

together the principal partners. The result was impressive: more than two hundred textbooks were published, and a 1,200-page decree defined the curricula subject by subject for each of the thirteen years of education (nine basic and four secondary), dated March 29, 1993.

The reform was to be evaluated regularly, and this job was given to the Institute of Educational Sciences, a body entrusted with ethical oversight and given financial autonomy. The first full assessment took place in June 2002, when students who had entered the school system in 1989, the date of the reform, would be graduating and entering university. But it is too early to make a definitive assessment.

In years to come it will be practically impossible to modify the content of the reform or to betray its spirit without creating a major political and cultural crisis in Tunisia.Of course, since 1994 (when Charfi resigned as Minister), successive education ministers have each tried to roll back aspects of the reform, but without success.

A new education law was adopted in 2002, but its goals were purely formal and political. What is essential in the reforms—aspects relating to philosophy, civic and religious education—has been preserved.

On the whole, one can affirm that Tunisia presents a model of how to school young Arabs in a Muslim culture that is simultaneously modern and cosmopolitan.

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NOTES

1. Jordan: 1952 constitution (art. 2); Tunisia: 1959 constitution (art. 1); Iraq: 1968 constitution (art. 4); Algeria: 1996 constitution (art. 2); Morocco: 1996 constitution (art. 6); Mauritania: 1991 constitution (art. 5).
2. Bahrain: 1973 constitution (art. 2); Preamble to the Moroccan constitution; Mauritania (art. 1).
3. Fundamental Charter of March 1, 1992 (art. 7).
4. Kuwait: 1962 constitution (art. 2: one of the principal sources); United Arab Emirates: 1971 constitution of union (art. 7); Egypt: 1971 constitution (art. 2 as revised in 1980); Qatar: 1970 constitution (art. 1); Syria: 1973 constitution (art. 3: Islamic law is the principal source); Oman: 1996 constitution (art. 2); Yemen: 1994 constitution (art. 3: of all legislation); Iraq: 2004 constitution (art. 7A). This is also the case in a non-Arab country, Iran: 1979 constitution (art. 2: divine sovereignty).
5. Djibouti, Morocco, and Mauritania.
6. See in particular, *Islamic Education, 3rd year, middle level,* pp. 8, 15, 37, 40, and *5th year,* p. 83, etc.
7. *Islamic Education, 2nd year, middle level,* p. 40.
8. Trans. note: This is the Everyman translation of the Koran by Marmaduke Pickthall; the French translation is "to command the good and avoid the

evil"—rather different in connotations. Translation of the Koran by A. Yusuf Ali (1983). Maryland, Amana Corp. "What is right includes right conduct and what is wrong is broader than indecency." The legal principle belonging to Islamic law, but grounded on the Koran, reports only a part of the verse which is however much longer (3:104) as a personal or a collective duty.

9. Institut Arabe des Droits de L' Homme (IADH), Report on Egypt, p. 39.
10. *Egyptian reader, 1st primary year*, pp. 28, 30.
11. *Islamic Education, 3rd year, middle level*, p. 37.
12. *Islamic Education, 2nd secondary year*, 1996 edition, p. 85 ff.
13. *Islamic Education, 9th primary year*, 1996 edition, p. 65.
14. Moroccan book, *Islamic Thought and Philosophy,* 1996.
15. *Basic education, 8th year*, p. 175.
16. One could fill dozens of pages with examples of this kind from the Moroccan *Language Lessons* (in Arabic) from the fifth year of basic education, a grammar book that gives a rule and follows it with a text that illustrates it. The themes of these illustrations are not chosen at random. One finds on page 3 the suffering of the first Muslims persecuted in Mecca, on page 38 Mecca, on page 41 the necessity of being a good Muslim, page 59 the conduct of Omar the Second Caliph, page 78 Muslims of science throughout history, page 84 the Prophet's conduct, page 85 Muslim Andalusia, page 91 Baghdad in the era of the Abbassids, page 103 a prayer, page 136 Ramadan, page 139 Mulsims obeying the Koran, and on page 140 the Prophet.
17. A private religious school created in 1867 in northern India in the state of Uttar Pradesh by the holy man Muhammed Qacim Nanautawi, ten years after the closing of the schools by the British in 1857.
18. Among the contemporaries, one might cite as examples Mohamed Talbi and Abdelmajid Charfi in Tunisia, and Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd and Ashmawy in Egypt and Filaly-Ansary in Morocco.
19. Dhimmi means in Arabic "under protection." Protection and autonomy were granted upon the payment of a poll tax by the "people of the Book" (Qur'an 9:29), that is, Jews and Christians; however, this status was extended by Islamic Law to Sabeens, Samaritans, and Zoroastrians who were considered to have a "quasi-Book."
20. *The whole Islamic education book, sixth year of secondary*, published in 1988.
21. Op. cit., p. 170.
22. *Book of Islamic Education, fourth year of secondary*, 1988 ed.
23. *Book of Islamic Education, fifth year of secondary*, 1988 ed., p. 39. Previous editions contained the same developments on different pages.
24. Op. cit., p. 73.
25. Op. cit., pp. 124–139.
26. See Jonathan Randall, "Tunisia Attuned Education to Islam and to Democracy," *The Washington Post*, September 7, 1995.
27. As demonstrated in a thesis defended by Michel Guillaud at the Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome in 1995, dealing with religious education in Tunisia.

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