



# Towards an Islamic Decoloniality

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# Course Outline

Seminar 1 – Racism, Colonialism and White Supremacy

Seminar 2 – Race, Colonialism and Islam

Seminar 3 – Islam and Decoloniality



# Seminar 3

## Islam and Decoloniality





**ISLAM**

**DECOLONIALITY**



# Part I

## Decoloniality



# What is Decoloniality?

**Critical thinking** emerging in the colonies and ex-colonies

Highlights **racial** discrimination, i.e. (the hierarchy of human beings, since the sixteenth century, that justified economic and political subordination of people of colour and women)

Focus – "**epistemic** decolonization"

**De-linking** from the perspective of spaces that have been silenced, repressed, demonized, devaluated by the triumphant chant of self-promoting modern epistemology, politics and economy and its internal dissensions (honest liberals, theologians of liberation, post-moderns and poststructuralists, Marxists of different brands)

SOURCE: Mignolo, Walter D. (2010) Introduction: Coloniality of power and decolonial thinking. In *Globalization and The Decolonial Option*. Edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar. London: Routledge, pp.1-21.



# What is Decoloniality?

Need for **border thinking** and **decolonial projects**; experiences that disengage from the 'obligation' to see the world according to the ethnical experiences hidden behind the epistemic universality of the **hubris of the zero point** [i.e. the Eurocentric postulate of an objective 'view from nowhere']

Decolonial thinking is the **pluri-versal** epistemology of the future; an epistemology that de-links from **the tyranny of abstract universals**

SOURCE: Mignolo, Walter D. (2010) Introduction: Coloniality of power and decolonial thinking. In *Globalization and The Decolonial Option*. Edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar. London: Routledge, pp.1-21.



# Decolonial Frameworks

		Geo-Politics	
		GN	GS
Body-Politics	N-W		
	W		

		Geo-Politics	
		GN	GS
Epistemology	N-E		DC
	E	PM	PC

		Ontology	
		CONC	ABS
Embodiment	DISEM		M (Descartes)
	EM	DC (Fanon)	PM (Merleau-Ponty)

W – white, N-W – non-white, GN – Global North / The West, GS – Global South / The Non-West / The Rest  
 E – Eurocentric, N-E – Non-Eurocentric, EM – embodied, DISEM – disembodied, CONC – concrete, ABS - abstract



# Universality as Pluri-versality

"A **truly universal** decolonial perspective **cannot** be based on an **abstract universal** (one **particular** that raises itself as universal global design), but would have to be the result of the **critical dialogue between** diverse critical epistemic / ethical / political projects towards a pluriversal as opposed to a universal world" (Grosfoguel 2011, page 3)

"Decolonization should aspire at the very minimum to restore a reality where racialized subjects could **give and receive freely** in societies founded on the principle of **receptive generosity**" (Maldonado-Torres 2010, page 114)

SOURCES: Grosfoguel, Ramon (2011) Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1(1): 1-37; Maldonado-Torres, N. (2010) On The Coloniality of Being: Contributions to The Development of a Concept. In *Globalization and The Decolonial Option*. Edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar. London: Routledge, pp.94-124.



# Theological-Philosophical Foundations

## Mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century (Descartes)

Mind-body dualism → Disembodied **subject** relating to **objects**  
(Eurocentric) subject of enunciation is hidden

"**Zero-point philosophy**" – God's-Eye View [Santiago Castro-Gomez]

- Theocentrism ↔ Anthropocentrism (White Man **as God**)
- Theo-politics ↔ Ego-politics [Ramon Grosfoguel]

"I **think** therefore I am" (rather than "I am because **we** are")

- **ego cogito** as (Eurocentric = Universal) **Rational** Subject



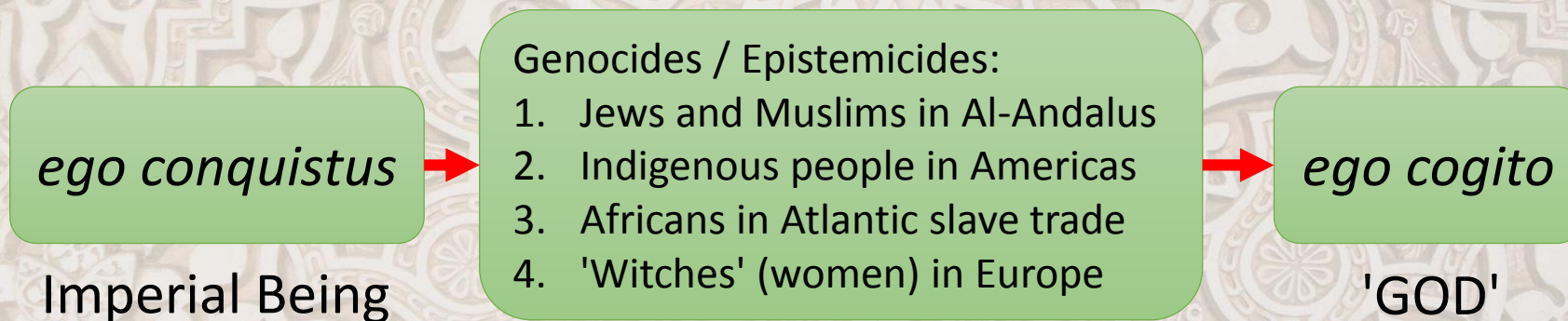
# Theological-Philosophical Foundations

Cartesian disembodied **subject** relating to **objects**

- Construction of hierarchy of **superior** and **inferior** knowing / being
- Zones of Being (white) and non-Being (non-white) [Fanon]

**ego cogito** preceded by **ego conquistus** [Enrique Dussel]

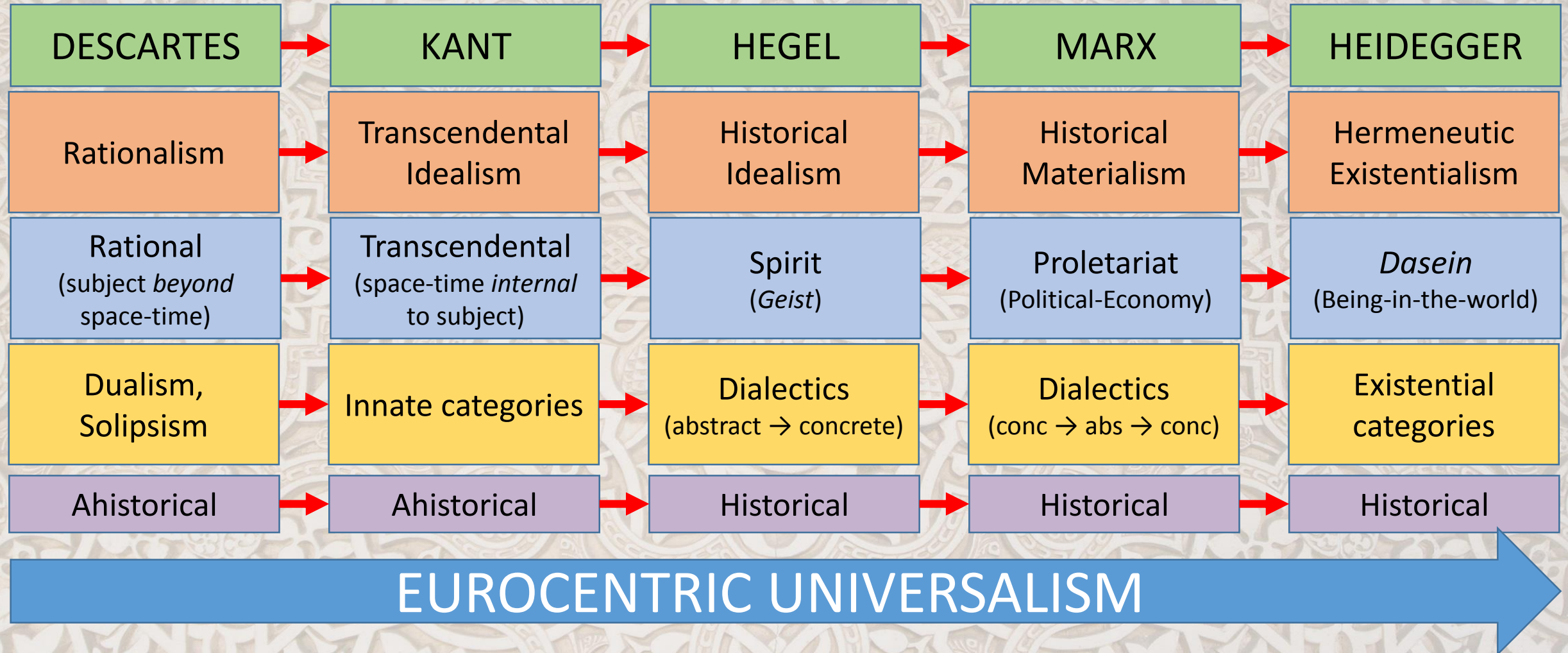
- **knowledge** considered in the **same** way as **property** [Anibal Quijano]



SOURCE: Grosfoguel, Ramon (2013) *The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities* Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides / Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11(1):73-90

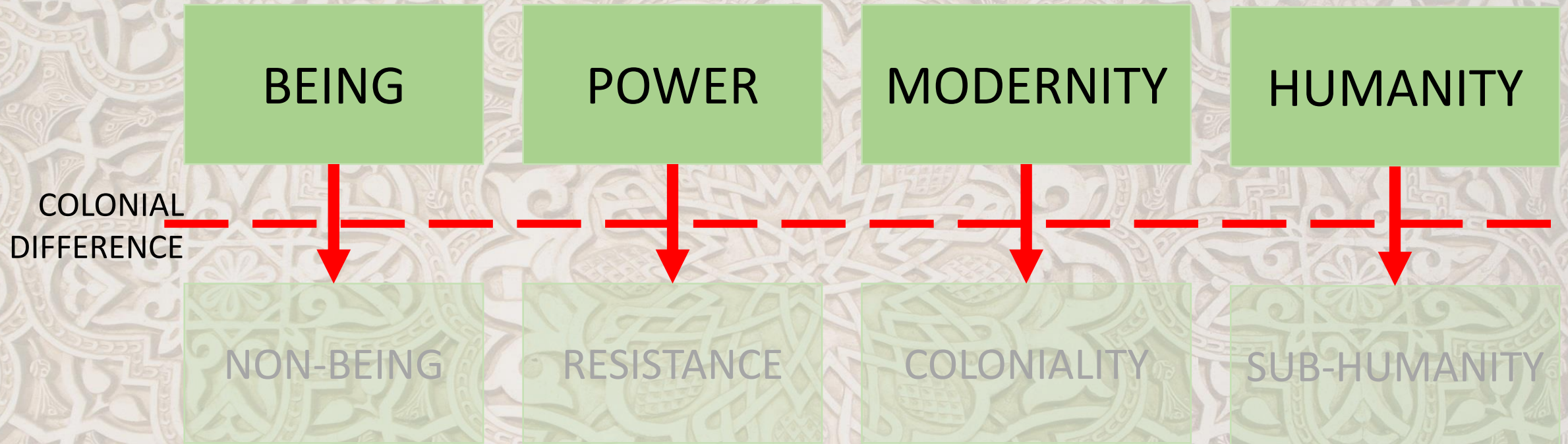


# Theological-Philosophical Foundations





# Theological-Philosophical Foundations



"I think (others do not think, or do not think properly), therefore I am (others are not, lack being, should not exist or are dispensable)"

SOURCE: Maldonado-Torres, N. (2010) On The Coloniality of Being: Contributions to The Development of a Concept. In *Globalization and The Decolonial Option*. Edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar. London: Routledge, pp.94-124.



# Race / coloniality as Ontology

The '**onto-colonial**' describes the modernity of social realities historically **brought into racialized being** by colonial regimes of demarcations, designations and deployments, that is to say as the effects of onto-colonial taxonomies.

Western hegemonic modernity discourse in **forgetting** its own entangled and contested onto-colonial '**origins**' can no longer be relied upon to furnish its privileged, provincial categories for the genealogy of 'race'. The idea of **racialized modernity** allows us to interpret modernity as a historical and discursive 'European'/'non-European' colonial process.

SOURCE: Hesse, B. (2007) "Racialized Modernity: An Analytics of White Mythologies." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(4): 643-663.



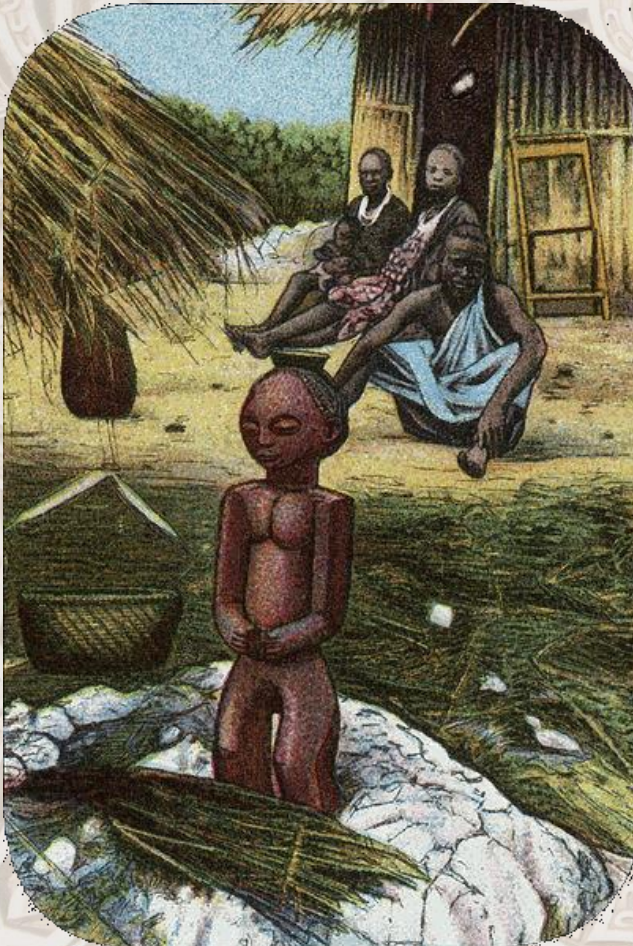
# Race / Coloniality as Theology

"I will speak of **race creation** (an act of **anthropic gods**) and of racial **constitution**. Race creation emerges out of the creations – the **fabrications** – of real social actors in their constructed reproductions and transformations of established discursive formations and expressions. These creations are products of actual relations: It is real people, after all, who express themselves by means of a discourse or set of discourses, who make meaning and history. These **social (self-)creations** come **as though given, fixed from on high**, seemingly natural phenomena **imposed** almost unchangingly upon an innocent and so non-responsible social order. Racial constitution is what **gives** one racial identity, what **makes** one (up as) a racial member, what **inscribes** one racially in society and in the law and identifiably gives substance to one's social being." (Goldberg 1993)

SOURCE: Goldberg, D.T. (1993) *Racist Culture: Philosophy and The politics of Meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell.



# Race / Coloniality as Fetish



An **artefact** (man-made object) that has **power** over others by being transformed from a *subjective* concept to an *objective* thing  
Fetishism as **idolatry**



# Race / Coloniality and The State

## THE RACIAL STATE



DAVID THEO GOLDBERG



Racial theory and state theory have tended to **ignore** each other

Race is **integral** to the conceptual, philosophical and material formation of the modern state, and to its ongoing management

By interrogating conceptual **shifts** in defining the racial state over time, it can be shown that debates and struggles about race in a wide variety of societies are **really** about the nature of political constitution and community

SOURCE: Goldberg, David Theo (2001) *The Racial State*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell



# The State

Five **form-properties** possessed by the modern state

1. its **constitution** as a historical experience that is fairly specific and local [i.e. European / Euro-American]
2. its **sovereignty** and the metaphysics to which it has given rise
3. its **legislative monopoly** and the related feature of **monopoly over so-called legitimate violence**
4. bureaucratic **machinery**
5. its **cultural-hegemonic engagement** in the social order, including its **production** of the national subject

SOURCE: Hallaq, Wael (2013) *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*. Columbia University Press



# Part II

## Decolonial Islam



# Decolonial Islam

Lewis (1971) – three formulations of the meaning of Islam

## 1. Religion

- Taught by Prophet Muhammad and embodied in The Qur'an

## 2. Doctrine

- Development of religion through tradition and work of jurists and theologians;

## 3. Civilization

- Actions of people (i.e. Islam as the Islamicate) (pp.5-6)

What is decolonial Islam? Focus on (2) and (3)

SOURCE: Lewis, Bernard (1971) *Race and Color in Islam*. New York: Harper & Row.



# "The Orphans of Modernity"

Khaled Abou El Fadl has described the Salafi / Wahhabi nexus underpinning **Islamism** as "the orphans of modernity" and maintains that its ideological motivations are **anti-colonial**, **nihilistic** and **reactionary**, **not** principled and 'authentically' Islamic

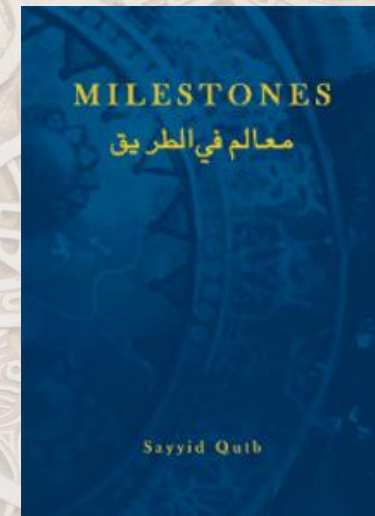
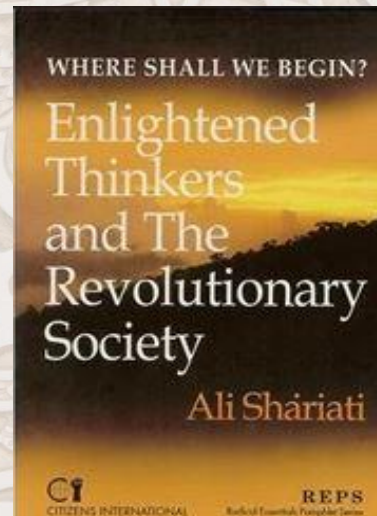
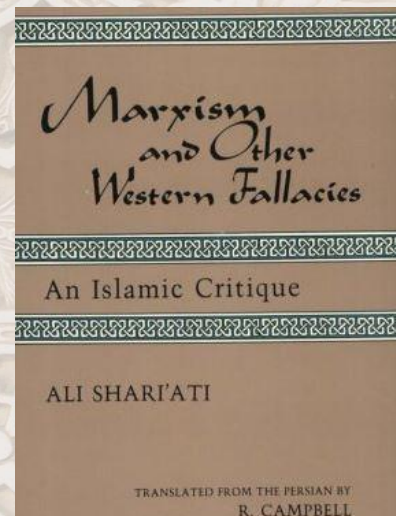
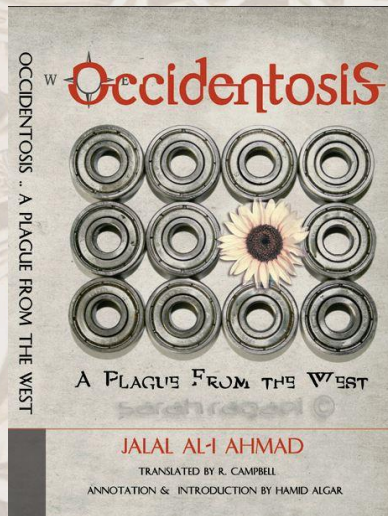
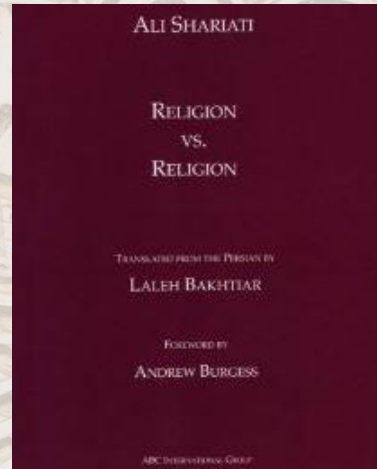
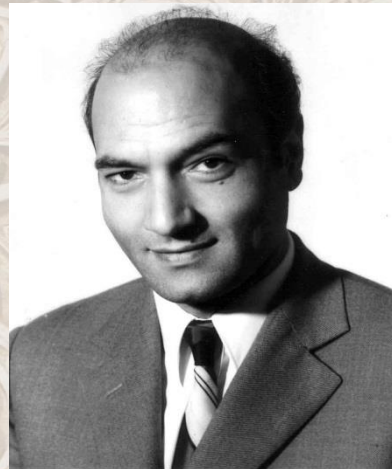
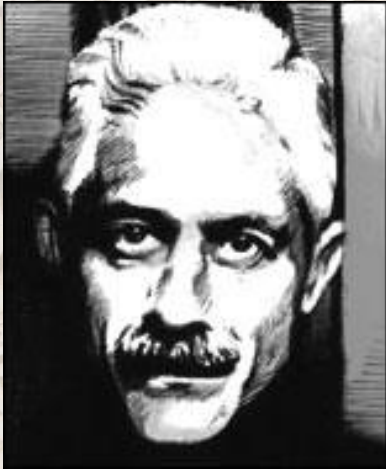
He further argues that the anti-colonial reactionary thrust of Islamism lends itself to an **authoritarian** perspective which manifests in a commitment to a "**Muslim Supremacist**" worldview, viz. the goal of (re-)establishing **global Islamicate hegemony**

- Insofar as this framing of Islamism is correct, what would a '**critical Islamism**', one that is **decolonial** rather than anti-colonial, in orientation look like?

SOURCE: El Fadl, Khaled Abou (2002) The Orphans of Modernity and the Clash of Civilisations. *Global Dialogue* 4(2): 1-16



# Precedents – Critical and Islamist





# Critical Islamism (Sayyid)

Postmodernity *as* **decentring** of 'The West'

- **revealing** the **particularity** = **non-universality** of Eurocentrism
- "Universalism is ... nothing more than a sedimented order: a world-view which **appears** to be the reflection of a natural order ... Universalism is not external to the particular but the **expansion** of one particularity, so that it can **internalize** other particularities. What distinguishes the universalized particularity from any other particularity is **empire** (power). " (Sayyid 2000)
- "The quest for a **de-centred** cultural formation inscribes the **domination of one particular formation**" (Sayyid 2000)
  - Is this *necessarily* true? What about **pluriversality** / **multiversality**?

SOURCE: Sayyid, S. (2000) Bad Faith: Anti-Essentialism and Universalism. In *Hybridity and its Discontents*. Edited by Avtar Brah and Annie. E. Coombes. London: Routledge



# Critical Islamism (Sayyid)

Islam *as* a **project** produced by a set of **articulatory practices**

- "Islamism or the Western project are not that different. One may have one's own prejudices for preferring one to the other, but both are **attempts to re-make the world**. Neither is sanctioned by any innate logic, but they are themselves **grand political projects**: project that aim to transform our cultures, histories and societies" (Sayyid 2000)
  - Cf. Islam *as* a "**discursive system**" (Anjum 2008)

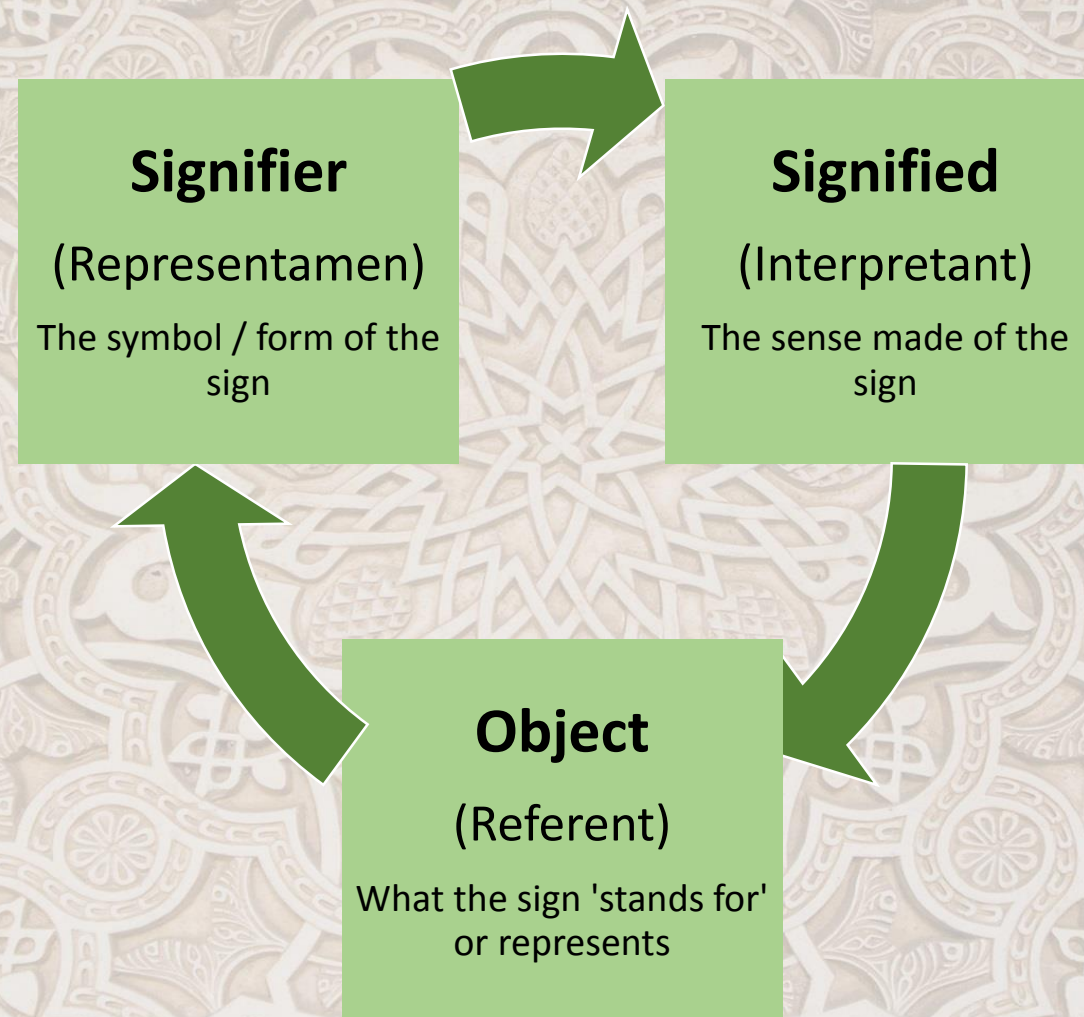
Islam *as* a "**master signifier**" (Sayyid 1997)

- Cf. Islam *as* **ethnicity**, Islam *as* **ideology** etc.
- **Methodological anti-foundationalism**

SOURCE: Sayyid, Salman (1997) *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and The Rise of Islamism*. London: Zed Books; Sayyid, S. (2000) Bad Faith: Anti-Essentialism and Universalism. In *Hybridity and its Discontents*. Edited by Avtar Brah and Annie. E. Coombes. London: Routledge; Sayyid, Salman (2004) A Phantom Menace: Post-modernity and Islam. *Muslim Studies Network* <http://www.muslimstudies.net/show.asp?p=67&i=26>; Anjum, Ovamir (2008) Putting Islam Back into the Equation: Islam as a Discursive World-System. In *Islam and The Orientalist World System*. Edited by Khaldoun Samman and Mazhar Al-Zo'by. London: Paradigm, pp.93-105.



# Signification Revisited





# "Master Signifiers" – Islam and Race





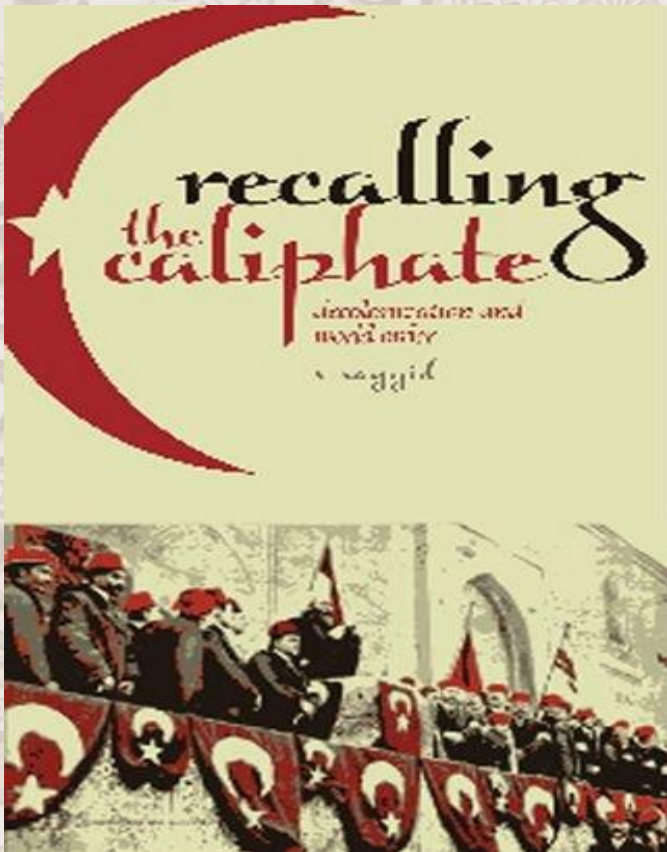
# Islam – 'master' or 'empty' signifier?

"The processes of the formation of **hegemony** are constituted when a **particular** subject becomes an **empty signifier** through which **all particulars** are identified and stamped with meaning, establishing chains of equivalence between themselves and simultaneously creating **chains of difference against a common enemy**. This counter-hegemonic power bloc is always hegemonized by a **particular** that becomes **the representative** of **all** forms of oppression against a common enemy, but which does **not** incorporate **each** particularity into itself, instead **dissolving** these into the **abstract universal of the empty signifier** which represents the particular subject, articulated into chains of equivalence among the oppressed." (p.98)

SOURCE: Grosfoguel, Ramon (2012) Decolonizing Western Universalisms: Decolonial Pluri-versalisms from Aime Cesaire to the Zapatistas. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1(3): 88-104.



# Critical Islamism (Sayyid)



**Re-politicisation of Islam**

**Re-politicisation of The Qur'an**

Defence of the idea of *asala*  
(authenticity, rootedness)

Possibilities of "Islamic futures"

- **Reclaiming and making** Islamicate **history**
- **Recalling The Caliphate** (2014)

Defence of the idea of an "**Islamic State**"

- Spatialisation of **power**

SOURCE: Sayyid, S. (2000) Bad Faith: Anti-Essentialism and Universalism. In *Hybridity and its Discontents*. Edited by Avtar Brah and Annie. E. Coombes. London: Routledge; Sayyid, Salman (2014) *Recalling The Caliphate*. London: C. Hurst & Co.



# The (Racial) State as "False God"

The Weberian conception of the 'state' – the *paradigmatic* formulation – is an **abstract, universal and timeless subject (actor)** and an 'entity' / 'agency' claiming

- socio-cultural nurturing capacity and a monopoly over law and the exercise of force / power
- sovereignty
- metaphysical - that is, ultimate / absolute *transcendent* – status



# The (Racial) State as "False God"



'Leviathan' (The State) **assumes** the role of

- fosterer
- sovereign
- god

However, The Qur'an states

*Say, "I seek refuge in the Fosterer (**rabb**) of mankind, the Sovereign (**malik**) of mankind, the God (**ilaah**) of humanity (114:1-3)*



# The (Racial) State as "False God"



The sovereign state is "conceived as the **efficient agency of its own construction** ... comparable to the divine *creation ex nihilo* [from nothing]" and "capable of having or expressing such an act of will" (p.27)

However, The Qur'an asks

*Were they created from nothing, or were they the creators (of themselves)? (52:35)*

SOURCE: Hallaq, Wael (2013) *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*. Columbia University Press



# The (Racial) State and Polytheism

"To be a **citizen** ... means to live under a sovereign will that has its own metaphysics. **It is to live with and under yet another god, one who can claim the believers' lives.** (... [T]his attribute alone, with its grave implications, would suffice to render **the modern state** an anathema to any form of Islamic governance.) (Hallaq 2013, p.28)

Thus, as "state citizens", Muslims are "serving two masters" (39:29, 12:39, 16:51) – a condition described in Islam as **shirk** (that is, polytheism or association of "false gods" with God/Allah)

SOURCE: Hallaq, Wael (2013) *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*. Columbia University Press



# The (Impossible) Islamic State

CLAIM: Statism is **theo-politically incompatible** with Islam; hence, the idea of an 'Islamic State' is incoherent or 'impossible' (Hallaq 2013)

COUNTER-CLAIM: The idea of an 'Islamic State' is coherent or 'possible' because the Weberian conception of the state is **non-exhaustive** of the concept (Sayyid 2014)

## DEFENSE OF CLAIM:

- Weberian conception of state expresses modernity / coloniality
- *Pre-modern* Islamicate / dynastic (*dawlatiy*) formations were **NOT** statist – *dawlat* does **not** mean 'state' (Al-Barghouti 2008)

SOURCE: Al-Barghouti, Tamim (2008) *The Umma and The Dawla: The Nation State and the Arab Middle East*. London: Pluto Press;  
Sayyid, Salman (2014) Personal communication.



# The Meaning of *Dawlat*

The ***Ummat*** is a group of people who might not necessarily desire to be ruled by one government, but would rather expect any government ruling over any portion of them to be **accountable to the whole** group not only to the portion under its authority

The ***Dawlat*** is a **non-sovereign, non-territorial, temporary** political arrangement that is accountable to and responsible for the whole *Ummat*, not only to that portion of the *Ummat* under its jurisdiction

The *Dawlat* is bound by Shari'a (Islamic law) which is **pluralistic and decentralised** in production and application

SOURCE: Al-Barghouti, Tamim (2008) *The Umma and The Dawla: The Nation State and the Arab Middle East*. London: Pluto Press



# The (Impossible) Islamic State

"Paradigmatic **modern law is positive law**, the command of the **fiction of sovereign will**. Islamic law is **not** positive law but substantive, principle-based atomistic rules that are pluralistic in nature and ultimately embedded in a **cosmic moral imperative**. For Muslims today to adopt the positive law of the state and its sovereignty means in no uncertain terms the acceptance of a law emanating from political will, **a law made by men** who change their ethical and moral standards as modern conditions require. It is to accept that we live in a cold universe that is ours to do with as we like. It is to accept that **the ethical principles of The Qur'an and of centuries-old morally based *Shari'a* be set aside** in favour of **changing manmade laws**, laws that **have sanctioned** nothing less than **the domination and destruction of the very nature that God has given humankind to enjoy with moral accountability.**" (p.89)

SOURCE: Hallaq, Wael (2013) *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*. Columbia University Press



# White Supremacy as "Second Creator"

Basic principle of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*):

- *"No obedience to the creation in disobedience to The Creator"*

What does this mean in terms of a modern / colonial world in which some of the creation have set *themselves* up as "Second Creators"?

- "**White supremacy** may be a **violation of *tawhīd***, inasmuch as the sense of validation that one draws from **comporting with** the norms of the dominant West can **override** one's commitment to seeking the pleasure of God and even substitute for it" (Sherman Jackson 2010)
- White supremacy as ***shirk*** (polytheism / multi-theism / egolatry)

SOURCE: Jackson, Sherman (2010) <http://bandung2.blog.co.uk/2010/04/22/sherman-jackson-on-islam-and-white-supremacy-a-quick-response-to-a-private-correspondence-8427876/>



# White Supremacy as "Second Creator"

"Today, at least in the Western world, it is **neither graven images nor idols that pose the greatest challenge to God's monopoly on divinity; it is false *mysterium tremendum*, **second creators** and the socio-political reality these produce.** As such, it is **against these, and not against idols,** that modern men and women are likely to find **the deepest meaning and resonance in Islam's foundational principle: "There is no god except God (*lā ilāhā illa Allāh*)." And, on this understanding, the proper response to the problem of human contingency is not to seek to overcome it but to resist and oppose false *mysterium tremendum* and "re-creation", *both as subjects and as objects.*" (Jackson 2005, p.182)**

SOURCE: Jackson, Sherman A. (2005) *Islam and The Blackamerican: Looking Toward The Third Resurrection*. Oxford: OUP



# White Supremacy as "Second Creator"

In this context, it becomes clear that **opposition to white supremacy** – or for that matter, any supremacy, including male supremacy or Arab supremacy – is not the exclusive preserve of black nationalism. On the contrary, **opposition to white supremacy** should be embraced as a manifestation of **ultimate allegiance to God and the preservation of God's status as the *only* non-contingent Definer of ultimate value**. On this understanding, **God**, not "the man", becomes the **true motivator** and **ultimate** concern of **resistance**. Indeed, resistance in this context becomes part of the **struggle** to remain within the penumbra of primordial meanings where God occupies the centre of human consciousness. In this light, **resisting false *mysterium tremendum* and "second creators"** **acquires meaning not only for Blackamerican Muslims but for Muslims, period, whatever colour they might be** (Jackson 2005, p.182)

SOURCE: Jackson, Sherman A. (2005) *Islam and The Blackamerican: Looking Toward The Third Resurrection*. Oxford: OUP



# Part III

## Islamic Decoloniality



# Islamic Decoloniality

Lewis (1971) – three formulations of the meaning of Islam

## 1. Religion

- Taught by Prophet Muhammad and embodied in The Qur'an

## 2. Doctrine

- Development of religion through tradition and work of jurists and theologians;

## 3. Civilization

- Actions of people (i.e. Islam as the Islamicate) (pp.5-6)

What is Islamic decoloniality? Focus on (1)

SOURCE: Lewis, Bernard (1971) *Race and Color in Islam*. New York: Harper & Row.



# An Islamic Critique of Decoloniality

Decolonial **liberation** must be anti-**systemic**

The goal is a new **humanism** [Fanon, Wynter etc.]

- Is this goal **compatible** with Islam?
- Is there a need to decolonize the commitment to **humanism**?
  - Fanon / Wynter appear to assume the legitimacy of **secularism**
- *Can* humanism be anything other than **secular** in orientation?
  - Decolonialism 1.0 – from Eurocentric 'Man'-God to new humanism
  - Decolonialism 2.0 – beyond (new) humanism
    - De-sacralising the secular and moving toward "post-secularity"
      - Enrique Dussel and **transmodernity as post-secular / post-religious**
      - Talal Asad, S.M.N. Al-Attas etc.



# An Islamic Critique of Decoloniality

The challenge to religion ... is to make sure **resistance** remains a **means** rather than an **end in itself** and that it is exercised in consideration of goals that lie **beyond** self-serving quotidian interests. Otherwise, there is little that separates religion from secular movements and utopias. (Jackson 2005, p.171)

God, **not** "the man", emphatically **must** occupy the centre of religious consciousness (Jackson 2005, p.193)

A commitment to **God-consciousness** (*taqwa*) and personal piety will have to maintain their place above and beyond the revolt against "second creators" and false *mysterium tremendum* (Jackson 2005, p.197)

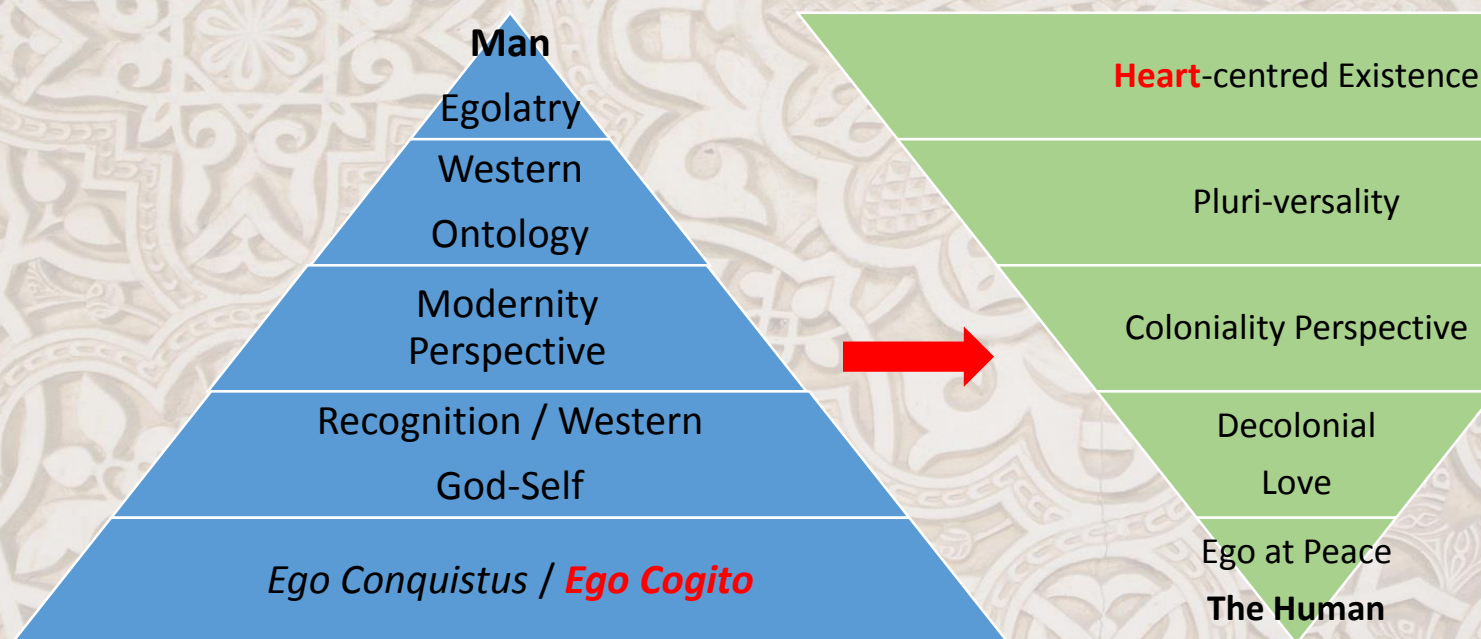
SOURCE: Jackson, Sherman A. (2005) *Islam and The Blackamerican: Looking Toward The Third Resurrection*. Oxford: OUP



# Islamic Decoloniality as Spirituality

"Islamic Sufism can make an important epistemological contribution to the perspective of decoloniality" (page 93)

- **From** Cartesian / modern / colonial centring in **mind**...
- ... **to** re-centring of consciousness in **spiritual heart**



SOURCE: Craun, Dustin (2013) Exploring Pluiversal Paths Toward Transmodernity: From the Mind-Centred Egotry of Colonial Modernity to Islam's Epistemic Decolonization through the Heart. *Human Architecture: Journal of Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11(1): 91-114.



# Islamic Decoloniality as Spirituality – Critique

## 1. Implicit assumption of an **exhaustive binary**

- "Modern revivalist Islam" (Wahhabism / Salafism) and secular modernism *versus* Islamic Mysticism (Sufism) / Traditionalism
  - *Salafabists as reactionary* "orphans of modernity" (Khaled Abou El Fadl)
  - What about formulations outside this framework, e.g. **Critical Islamism**?

## 2. Islamic spirituality (*Tasawwuf*) as a "master signifier"

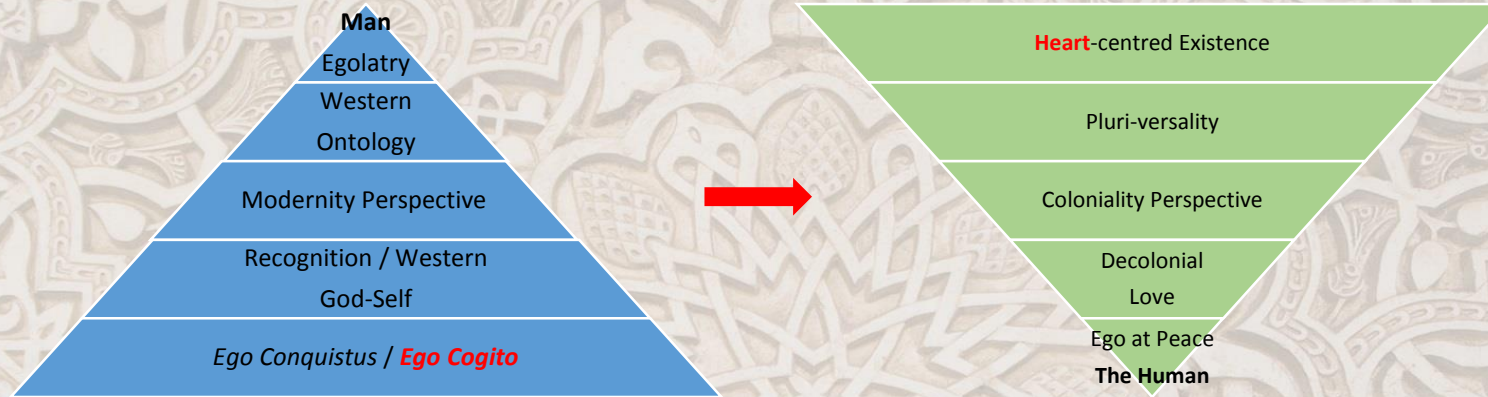
- Claimed **need** to centre Islamic spirituality
  - Why not Islam or even *dīn*?

## 3. Pyramidal / **artefactual** conceptualization

- The pyramid as symbol of oppression / tyranny in The Qur'an
  - Alternative 'organic' / '**natural**' Qur'anic metaphorical formulation – **maxims** (wholesome, rotten / poisonous) symbolized by **trees** (*shajaraat*) and focus on **rootedness** (*ithbaat*)
    - Cf. Aime Cesaire and **colonialism** as a "**poison**"



# Islamic Decoloniality as Spirituality – Critique



And the example of **a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted** from the surface of the earth, not having any stability (14:26)



Have you not considered how God / Allah presents an example, [making] **a good word is like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed** and its branches [high] in the sky? It **produces its fruit all the time**, by permission of its Lord. And God / Allah presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded (14:24-25)



# Islamic Decoloniality as Spirituality – Critique

## 4. Focus on the **heart** (*qalb*) as the organ of sight (*baseerat*)

- Yes, but the heart is a '**revolutionary** organ', *not* a site of 'stillness'
- Supplication of Prophet Muhammad:
  - "O Turner of the hearts [which revolve]! Make firm my heart on your *dīn*"
    - Could this mean that what is sought is **firmness of a revolutionary commitment** that is **rooted in the *dīn*** (life-transaction / power-relation) **acceptable to God/Allah?**

## 5. Claim that all decolonial shifts should **begin** with the necessary decolonization of the heart

- Ironically based on a **modern(ist)** / colonial reading of (13:11)
  - Contested by **another** Sufi, Eric Winkel (1997)
  - The heart as rectified (*saleem*) **through struggle** (*jihad*)

SOURCE: Winkel, Eric (1997) *Islam and The Living Law: The Ibn Al-Arabi Approach*. Oxford: OUP



# The Qur'an and Politicisation

- The Qur'an is divine and immutable (*transcendent*), its reading is historically conditioned and mundane (*immanent*)
- Centrality of a "Qur'an-*ummat* nexus" = Text-Interpretative Community
  - Consensus / conventions (*'ijma*) & contestation / struggle (*ijtihad*)
  - "What matters is how **Muslims** read the Qur'an, for **only Muslims believe that the Qur'an truly matters**" (Sayyid 2006, p.53)
- The Qur'anic should be viewed as a **non-linear text** designed to **guide** humanity, rather than as the **foundation** for a political order or a set of iron-clad **laws** for ruling a society
  - "Many Muslims want the Qur'an to provide a rock-like foundation, while others want to see in it the possibility of iron-like laws that cannot be twisted or bent by unscrupulous men (alas, mainly men). Time, however, can cause iron to rust and even the hardest of rocks to turn to dust." (Sayyid 2006, p.58)

SOURCE: Sayyid, Salman (2006) Rituals, Ideals, and Reading the Qur'an. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 23(1): 52-65



# The Qur'an and Politicisation

"The Qur'an provides a **common language** by which Muslims can relate and disagree, for it **binds** the *ummat* by providing it with a common currency that transcends the local and the immediate" (Sayyid 2006, p.59)

"**Decontesting** the Qur'an implies **depoliticizing** it, which, in turn, presents the possibility of a **depoliticized** Islam" (p.59)

- "Decontestation opens the path toward [The Qur'an] banalization and turning Islam into a form of ancestor worship, since the Qur'an's ability to guide the *ummat* depends upon its capacity to remain fresh; not to become a set of platitudes, but to remain full of meaning and, therefore, significant" (p.59)
- Interpretations of a text are constructed through the exercise of **power**

SOURCE: Sayyid, Salman (2006) Rituals, Ideals, and Reading the Qur'an. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 23(1): 52-65



# The Qur'an and Politicisation

- "The Qur'an, at its most powerful, offers its readers **an existential challenge**. It makes them think about the manner and direction of their lives and how they can aspire toward being **rightly guided**. At this level, the glory of the entire Qur'an comes into play; all its verses produce an effect upon the believers that cannot simply be reduced to the linearity of its writing, the content of its stories, or the authority of its injunctions, for the Qur'an rises above these moments and thereby provides **a means of accessing the transcendental**" (Sayyid 2006, p.62)

In short, Muslims read The Qur'an to commune with the Divine

- "The Qur'an can give direction, solace, and hope, but **it cannot substitute for the struggle to stake out a distinct Muslim presence in the world**" (Sayyid 2006, p.63)

SOURCE: Sayyid, Salman (2006) Rituals, Ideals, and Reading the Qur'an. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 23(1): 52-65



# Islamic Decoloniality as Liberation Theology

**Original Context** – struggle against South African apartheid

- "I argue for the freedom to rethink the meanings and use of scripture in a racially divided, economically exploitative and patriarchal society and to forge hermeneutical keys that will enable us to read the text in such a way as to advance the liberation of all people." (Esack 1997, p.78)

**Expanded Context** – decolonial struggle against

- "Global Apartheid"
- White Supremacy
- Modernity / coloniality

SOURCE: Esack, Farid (1997) *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective on Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*. Oxford: Oneworld.



# Qur'anic Liberation Hermeneutics

## Hermeneutic keys

### Moral / doctrinal

*Taqwa*

- awareness of the presence of God

*Tawhīd*

- the unity of God / Allah

***Tāghūt***

**- tyranny / "false gods"**

### Situational / contextual

*an-nās*

- the people

*al-mustad'afun f'il-ard*

- the marginalized

### Method / ethos

*'adl* and *qist*

- justice, equalisation, equity

*Jihād*

- struggle

SOURCE: Esack, Farid (1997) *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective on Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*.  
Oxford: Oneworld.



# Qur'anic Hermeneutics

It is necessary to explicate

- **social horizons** of the exegete and their exegesis
- explicit and implicit **socio-political and/or philosophical assumptions** underlying theological predilections
- "What is required of the **interpreter** today is a clear understanding of where he or she comes from, **a statement of his or her baggage as the word of God is being approached**" (Esack 1997, p.62)

SOURCE: Esack, Farid (1997) *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective on Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*. Oxford: Oneworld

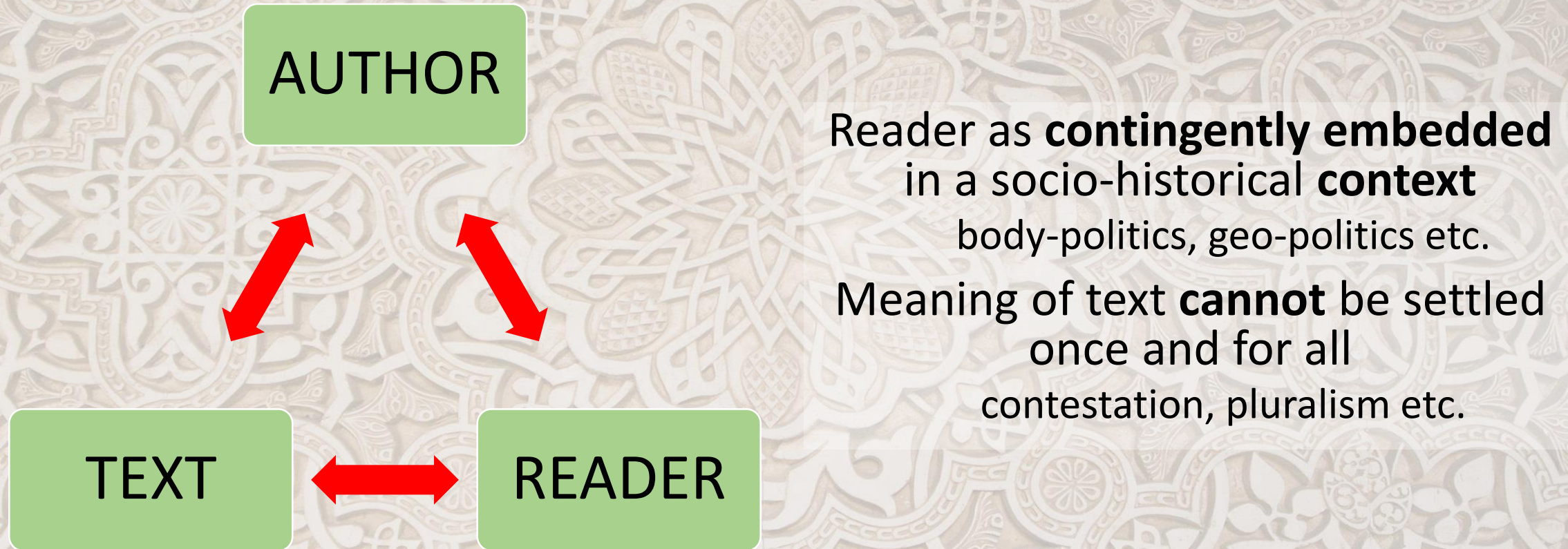


# Hermeneutic 'Baggage'

1. **Social Horizons** – a **non-white Muslim male** in a global system of white supremacy = colonial matrix of power
2. **Social Horizons** – commitment to critical Islamism **and** decolonial pluri-versality = **Counter-Supremacism**
3. **Philosophical / Theological** assumptions – The Qur'an is a Divine source of **guidance** for **people** and a **criterion** (2:185)
4. **Methodological** assumptions – The Qur'an is **self-explanatory**
  - *al-Qur'an-yufassir-b'adahu-b'ada, tafseer-ul-Qur'an b'il-Qur'an* etc.



# Hermeneutic Relationality





# Qur'anic Hermeneutics

The Arabic of The Qur'an makes use of concepts drawn from *Lughaat-al-Qur'aysh* (44:58) (19:97). In order to understand the Qur'anic idiom (i.e. forms of expression or constructs particular to a language), we need a procedure to establish the meaning of a word:

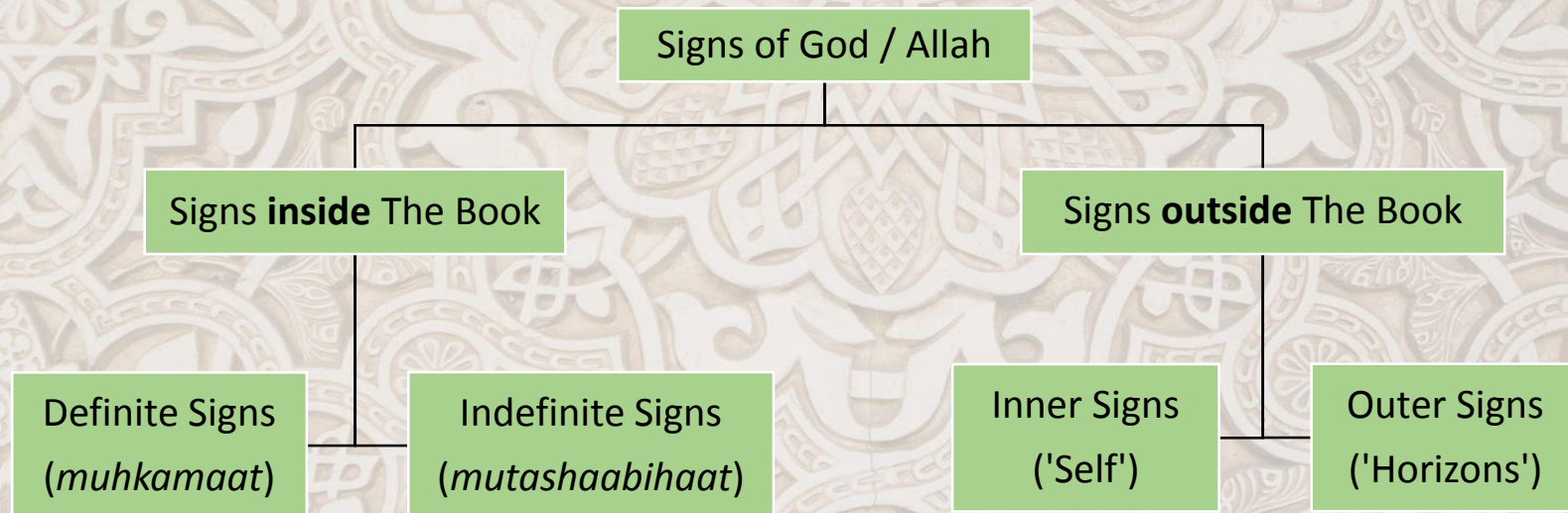
1. First the **root** of the word is given, which normally is **tri-literal** (that is, composed of three letters). Then, its basic meanings and characteristics are explained
  - E.g. the verb **ka-ta-ba** (to write, he wrote) in Form I, from which we can derive the active participle **kaatib** (a writer), the passive participle **maktoob** (that which is written), the noun **kitaabun** (a book or writing) etc.
2. Second, it is examined in the light of '*Muh'awaratul-Arab*', that is, how the Arabs used that word in various ways and in different contexts. By giving some examples from daily usage, the basic concept of that root becomes clearer.



# Qur'anic Hermeneutics

The Qur'an is a book / scripture (*kitaab*) containing **ayaat** (signs, messages, indicators) in Arabic (41:3) (12:2) (20:113) (43:3) (39:28)

The signs of God / Allah (*ayaat-Allah*) are **paired** (principle of *tazweej, tathneeya*) in **two** sets: (3:7) and (41:53)





# Qur'anic Hermeneutics

Understanding (***fiqh***) is achieved through the 'turning' (or inter-relation) of signs (6:65). The nature of this process is explained via reference to the 'turning' of the winds (*tasreef-ar-riyah*) (2:164) (45:5)

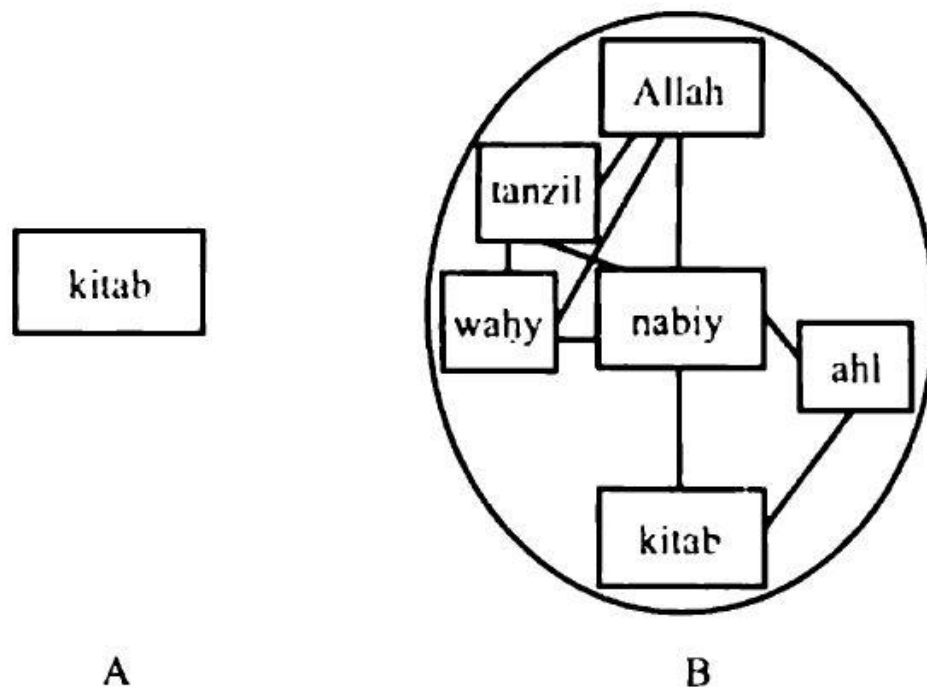
The **place** or position (*maqam*) of signs is itself significant. The Qur'an states that it has been **arranged** (75:17); thus, the **context** of a particular sign is significant in that it may act as a discriminator for (that is, contextual clue to) interpretation of that sign

The interpretation of any statement in The Book must be **consistent** with the interpretation of statements appearing elsewhere. This is because The Qur'an is free from internal **contradiction** (4:82). [NB: The Qur'an also maintains that there are **no** faults / gaps or breaks / cleavages in the cosmological order (67:1-4).] However, it is important to appreciate the distinction between consistency and **identity**, which means that different, contextually-relative renderings of the same term are possible

**Specific** words are used in The Qur'an to impart often subtle nuances of meaning (31:27)



# Semantic Map Approach



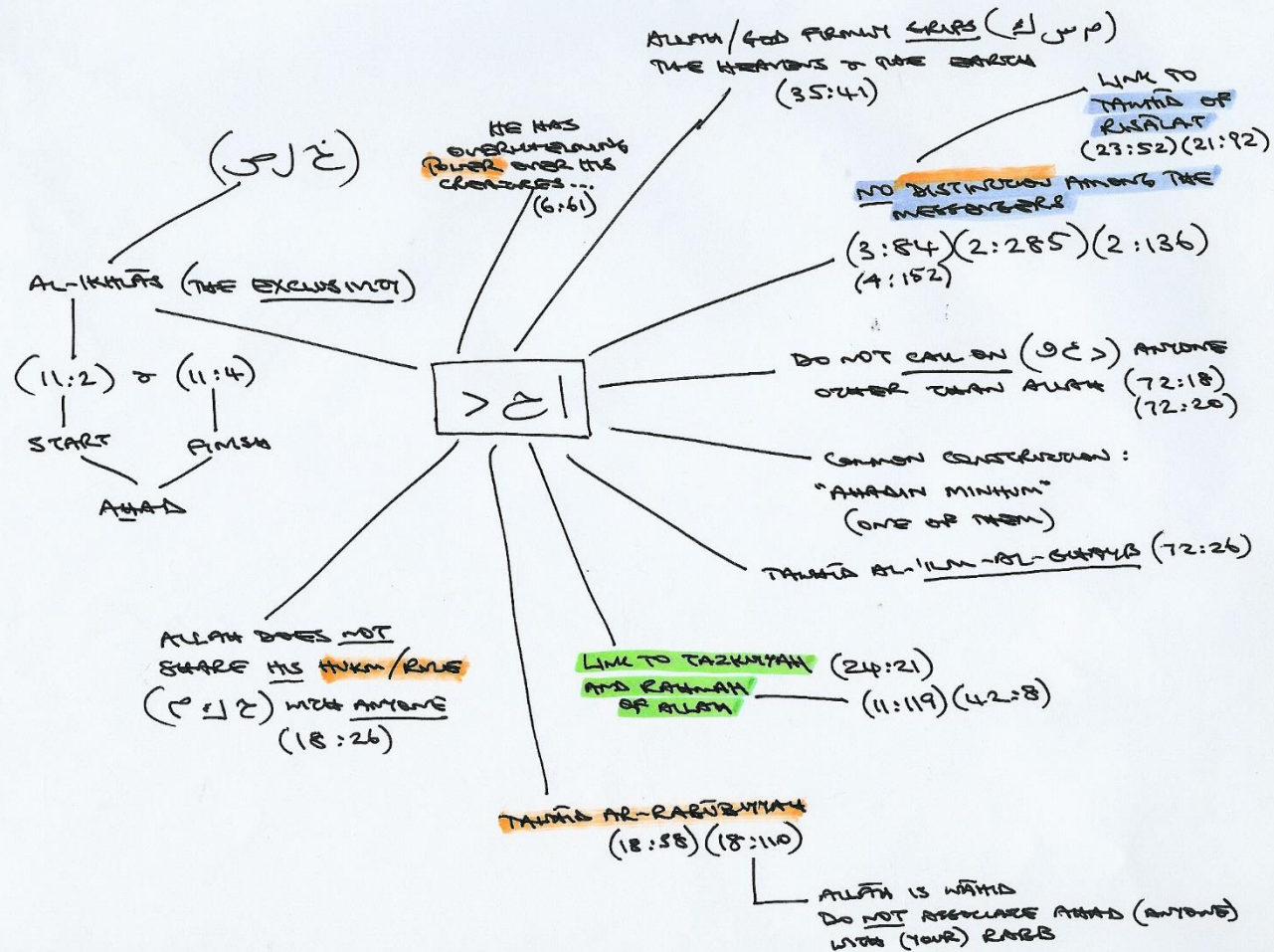
*A—the word kitāb in an ordinary context showing the basic meaning of 'book' pure and simple.*

*B—the same word kitāb in the semantic field of Revelation peculiar to the Qur'an.*

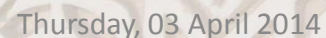
SOURCE: Izutsu, Toshihiku (2002) *God and Man in The Qur'an: Semantics of The Qur'anic Weltanschauung*. Kuala Lumpur: IBT Books



# Semantic Map – Tawhīd

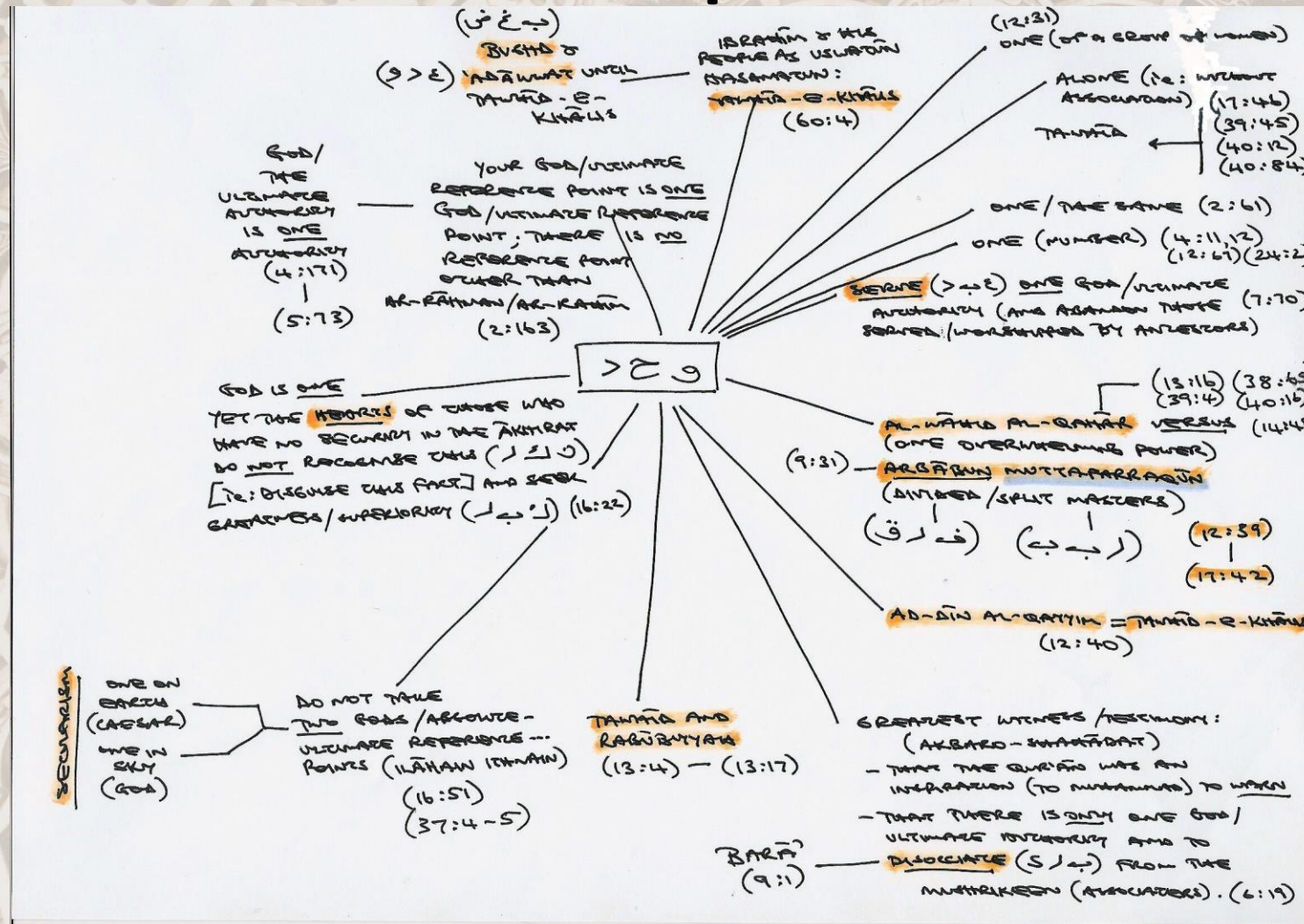








# Semantic Map – Tawhīd





# Basic Terminology – Tawhīd

*Say: He is God / Allah, **Unique**; God/Allah, The Independent upon whom everything depends; He **neither begets nor is begotten**, and **nothing is like Him** (The Qur'an, Chapter 114)*

- "In the **uniqueness** of the Creator we find the model of the **uniqueness of the human being**" (Hardy 2002, p.8)
  - Insofar as 'race' erases uniqueness through the construction of **group taxonomies**, this provides the basis for mounting a critique of 'race'
  - God as Independent upon which all depends entails **need for grounding**
    - Basis for mounting a critique of claims for **ontological self-sufficiency**
  - God / Allah has no **genus**, i.e. cannot be situated with the creational order
    - Basis for mounting a critique of **anthropic theology**, viz. **white man-god**
  - **No-one** can 'speak in God's name' since **no-one** can assume his **status**
    - Basis for mounting a critique of **authoritarianism**

SOURCES: Hardy, Paul. A (2002) *Islam and The Race Question*. Cambridge: Muslim Academic Trust;  
Abou El Fadl, Khaled (n.d.) Audio commentary (*tafsīr*) on Surah Al-Ikhlās (Chapter 114)



# Basic Terminology – Tawhīd

***Tawhīd*** means 'to be alone', 'one', 'an integrated unity' (Esack 1997, p.90)

***Tawhīd*** – ideological source and sacred frame of reference (p.91)

## Existential level

- Rejection of **dualistic** conception of human existence whereby a distinction is made between the **secular** and the **spiritual**, the **sacred** and the **profane**

## Socio-political level

- Opposition to a society which sets up **race** as an alternative object of veneration [that is, **race as an alternative to divinity**] and divides people along the lines of ethnicity (p.92)

SOURCE: Esack, Farid (1997) *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective on Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*. Oxford: Oneworld



# Basic Terminology – Tawhīd

***Tawhīd*** is seen as a **theological principle** called **monotheism**. But *Tawhīd* is neither monotheistic, nor polytheistic, nor atheistic. **It is not theistic at all. Allah is not an idea.** *Tawhīd* is **lived** by the Muslim. This is why our declaration of belief, or *Shahada*, is not a mere statement but a **social commitment** made in public. (Vadillo 2003, p.146)

***Tawhīd* is not monotheism**, it is not a metaphysical principle. Allah is beyond what is attributed to Him, therefore beyond *logos*. Allah is not a mono-theos, nor poli-theos, or tri-theos, or a-theos. **Allah is not theo-logical or onto-logical. Allah is neither a theory nor a principle.** Allah is not contained by definition. (p.332)

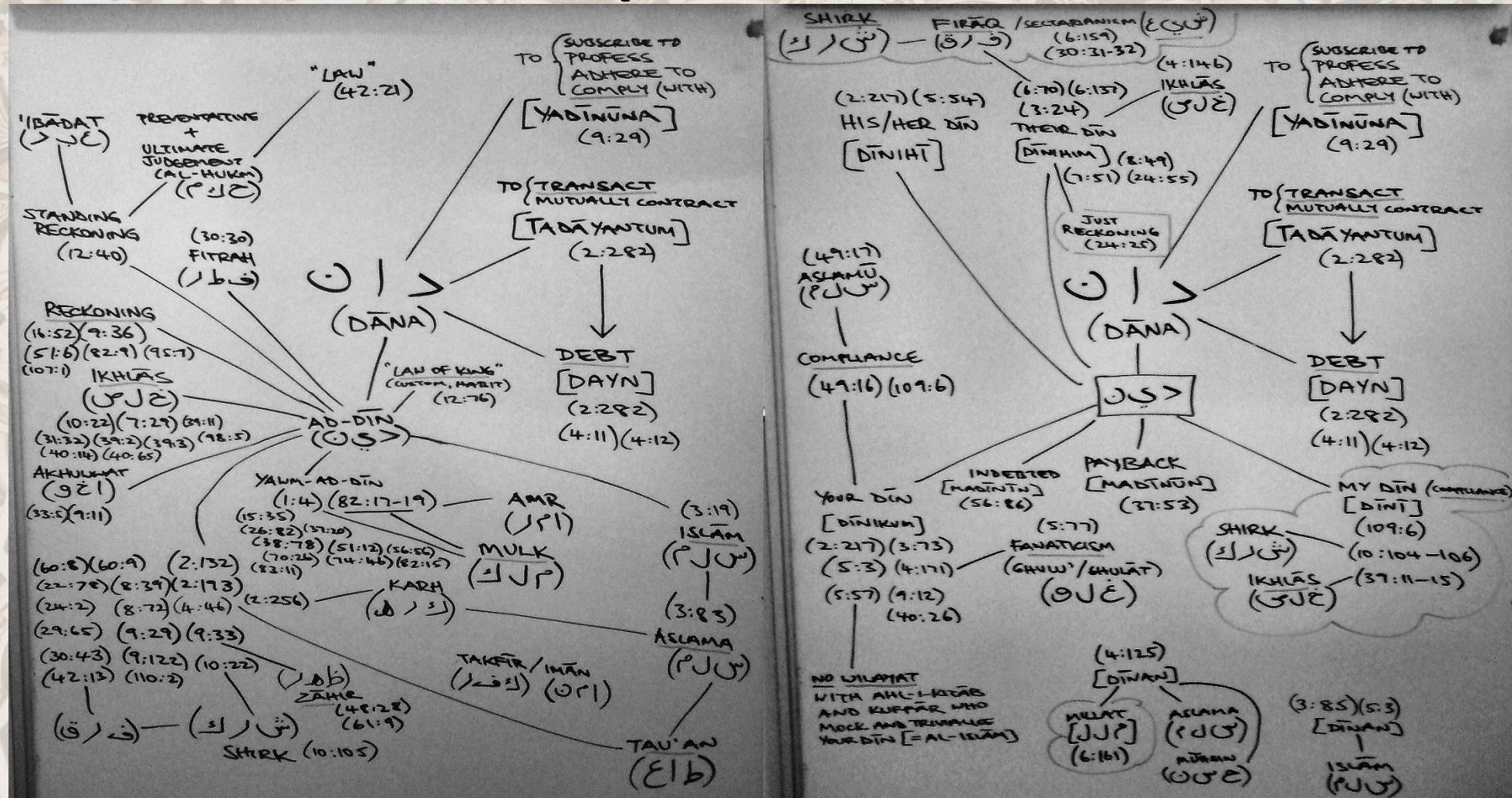
The theologian is in search of **principles** ... They want to understand without submission and because of that they fail. (p.332)

Submission is an act that cannot be replaced by an idea (*logos*). ***Tawhīd* is not a theological idea**, its acceptance is connected to **behaviour**. (p.147)

SOURCE: Vadillo, U.I. (2003) *The Esoteric Deviation in Islam*. Cape Town: Madinah Press



# Semantic Map – Dīn





# Basic Terminology – Islam

Islam is **not** a 'religion'

Religion in its Eurocentric modern / colonial 'secular' formation is **necessarily** confined to the **private** / **domestic** sphere and detached from **politics** (Talal Asad)

Islam is **not** a "master signifier" [contra. Sayyid]

Islam is a **dīn**, which has the following senses: (Al-Attas 1978)

- 1) Indebtedness
- 2) Submissiveness
- 3) Judicious power
- 4) Natural inclination or tendency

SOURCE: Al-Attas, S.M.N. (1978) *Islam and Secularism*. Lahore: Suhail Academy.



# Basic Terminology – Islam

Meaning of **dīn** in pre-Islamic literature (poetry)

1. Custom, habit
2. Requit
3. Obedience

Meaning of **dīn** in Islamist thought

1. Sovereignty / dominance
2. Obedience / submission
3. Law / regulation / code (system)
4. Judgement / accountability / retribution / requital



*Dīn* as etymologically related to *dayn* (debt)  
**Life-Transaction / Power-Relation**

SOURCE: Izutsu, Toshihiku (2002) *God and Man in The Qur'an: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung*. Kuala Lumpur: IBT Books; Maududi, S. Abul-'Ala (1979) *Four Basic Qur'anic Terms*. Lahore: Islamic Publications Limited



# The Purpose of Human Creation

The Qur'an (91:7-10) states

*[By] the 'self' (**nafs**) and (He) who proportioned it,  
And inspired it with its (capacity for) fragmentation and its (capacity  
for) self-preservation (**taqwa**).*

*He is successful (i.e. reaps a harvest) who causes it to grow (**tazkiyya**),  
And he has failed who buries it (i.e. stunts its growth)*

The purpose of human existence is to develop the 'self' (*nafs*) in a manner consistent with awareness of God, thereby preserving the 'self' from dissolution / fragmentation



# The Purpose of Human Creation

- *I did not create the jinn and the ins except **to serve Me** (51:56)*

However, God/Allah is *As-Samad* (Independent of all and The One on Whom all depend) (112:2)

Therefore, *'ibādat* (service) means serving God/Allah **by serving His creation in the way He intends it to be served**

- *And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up **The Balance**, in order that you may not transgress (due) **balance**. So establish weight with **justice** and fall not short in **The Balance**. (55:7-9)*



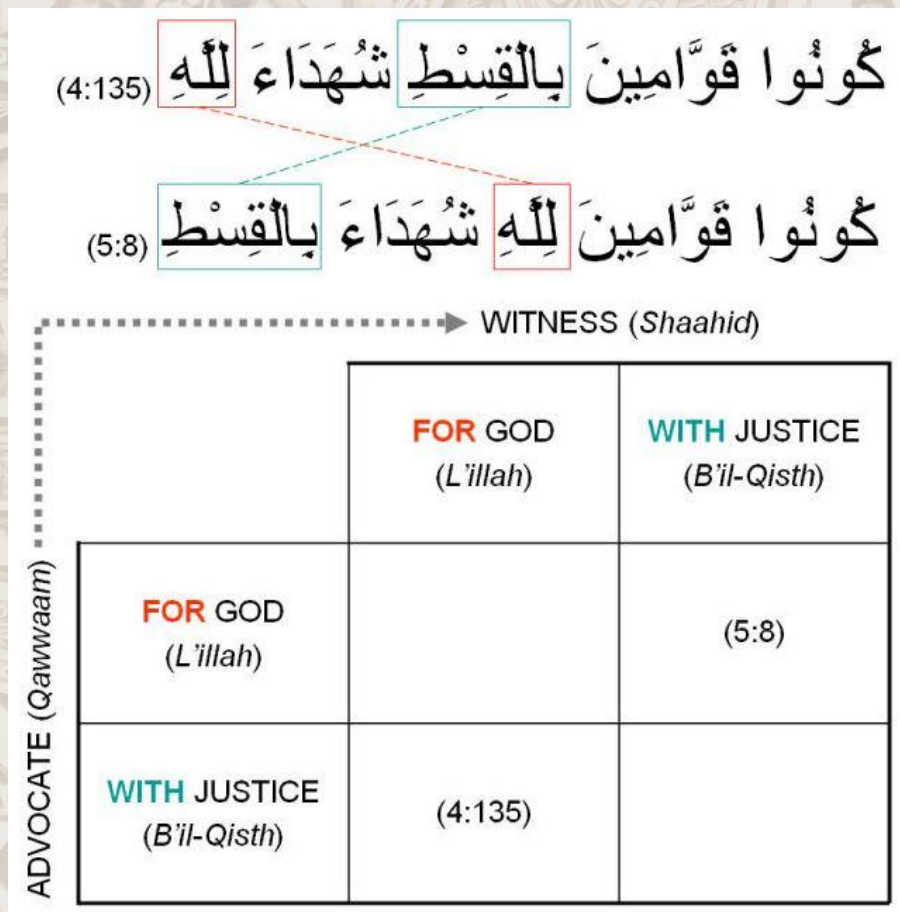
# God and Justice

*God/Allah is witness there is no god/ultimate but He, and so are the angelic forces/powers and men full of learning. He is the **upholder of justice**. There is no god/ultimate but He, The Mighty and The Wise (3:18)*

*Give news of painful punishment to those who deny the signs/indicators of God/Allah, and kill the recipients of revelation (i.e. the prophets) unjustly, and kill **those who order with justice** (3:21)*



# God and Justice



*O you who believe, stand firmly for justice as witnesses for God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be [against] rich or poor... (4:135)*

*O you who believe, stand firmly for God as witnesses for justice, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice... (5:8)*



# Islam, Justice and Equality

Justice does **not** necessarily mean **equality** / **equal treatment**

- "Islam may occasionally require that people be treated ***unequally*** in order to avoid the obliteration of these compelling interests [i.e. protection of life, din, progeny, property and intellect/dignity] ... Islam rejects the **blind pursuit of equality** as an **end in itself** ... [The principle of equality] is **effective** only in situations where one wants to **maintain the status quo** among parties who already enjoy **parity** with each other. Where the aim, however, is to **transform** the status quo between **unequal** parties, reliance upon the principle of equality is actually counterproductive." (Jackson 2000, pp.424-426)

SOURCE: Jackson, Sherman A. (2000) Islam and Affirmative Action. *Journal of Law and Religion* 14 (2): 405-431



# Islam, Justice and Equalisation

"As for justice the key words used in the Qur'an are '**adl** and **qist**. '**Adl** means in Arabic **not** only justice but it carries the sense of being equal **sawiyyat**. It also carries the sense of **equalising and levelling**. It is also taken as opposite of **zulm** and **jaur** (i.e. wrong doing and oppression). **Qist** also carries the sense of equal distribution, equal installment, equal spacing, as well as justice, fairness and equity. **Taqassata**, one of its derivations, also means equal distribution among the people. And, **qistas**, yet another derivation, means weighing balance. Thus both the words used in the Qur'an for justice, i.e. '**adl** and **qist**, carry a sense of equal distribution also thus emphasising equal distribution of material resources and permitting accumulation not more than socially necessary in a particular epoch." (Engineer 1990, p.50)

SOURCE: Engineer, Asghar Ali (1990) *Islam and Liberation Theology*



# Tyranny and "False Gods"

The Qur'an warns that those who cross the boundaries of justice into oppression by **dominating and overpowering others** (the verb "***taghā***" is significant since many people, including even Arabs, do not always understand the relationship between the verb "***taghā***" and the term "***tāghūt***," ...) *"spread (heap) therein corruption (mischief)."* (89:11-12) The story of Pharaoh and Moses is the paradigmatic story in the Qur'an of both tyranny and "speaking to power." Mentioned numerous times, the name **Pharaoh** ceased to be simply the name of an individual and became instead a **symbolic** reference to all **domination** that violated the precepts of **equity**. *"Truly Pharaoh elevated himself in the land and broke up its people into sects, dominating (depressing) a group among them: their sons he slew, their women he enslaved. He was indeed one of the (class of) corrupters (on earth)."* (28:4)

SOURCE: Said, Jawdat (2000-2001) Law, Religion and The Prophetic Method of Social Change. *Journal of Law and Religion* 15(1-2): 83-150



# Tyranny and "False Gods"

*"Serve God, and eschew tyranny..."* (16:36) ***Tāghūt*** and ***tughyān*** comes from the Arabic verb ***taghā*** which means **to dominate and control; to pass the limits in oppression**. The Qur'an uses this verb in relation to the Pharaoh in many instances ... This verb was also used in relation to the tribes A'ad and Thamoud in addition to Pharaoh. **The longest dialogue in the Qur'an between a prophet and his people is the dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh.** The Pharaoh was mentioned in the Qur'an more than 70 times and Moses over 100 times. The struggle of the prophet Moses was with one of the greatest and most domineering civilizations, which has left us the **pyramids**, as symbols of the power they possessed.

SOURCE: Said, Jawdat (2000-2001) Law, Religion and The Prophetic Method of Social Change. *Journal of Law and Religion* 15(1-2): 83-150



# Tyranny and "False Gods"

**Pharaoh, in the Qur'an, is more of an archetype.** He was the **king**, the **god** whom the Qur'an quoted in phrases that indicate **subjugation and conquest**, and the **division of his people into classes**. The Qur'an quotes different utterances by Pharaoh. *"He (Pharaoh) said: 'I am your Lord, **Most High**.'" (79:24) "Pharaoh said: 'O chiefs! **No god** do I know **for you but myself**...' (28:38) "Pharaoh said: 'If you put forward **any god other than me**, I will certainly imprison you.'" (26:29) And of him: *"Truly Pharaoh **elevated himself in the land and splintered up its people into factions**, taking advantage of a weak group among them: their sons he slew, and he kept the women alive, for he was indeed a maker of mischief."* (28:4)*

SOURCE: Said, Jawdat (2000-2001) Law, Religion and The Prophetic Method of Social Change. *Journal of Law and Religion* 15(1-2): 83-150



# Tāghūt and Racism (White Supremacy)

"If you do not **understand White Supremacy**, **what** it is and **how** it works, everything else that you **do** understand will only **confuse** you."  
(Fuller, Jr. 1971)

"If you do not **understand *Tāghūt***, **what** it is and **how** it works, everything else that you **do** understand will only **confuse** you." (Ali 2014)



# Digging Deeper (*tadabbur*)

Why race *as* *tāghūt*?

- Why **not** race *as* tribulation (*fitna*) or polytheism (*shirk*) [Jackson]?

Link between the term *tāghūt* and tyranny / oppression as exemplified by the figure of Pharaoh in The Qur'an

- *Does this go far enough?*





# Myths

A **myth** is a **sacred narrative** explaining how the world and humankind assumed their present form

Myths may arise as

- **truthful depictions** / over-elaborated accounts of **historical events**
- **allegory** for or **personification** of **natural phenomena**
- an **explanation** of ritual

Myths are used to

- convey religious or idealized experience
- **establish behavioural models**
- educate



# Myths and The Qur'an

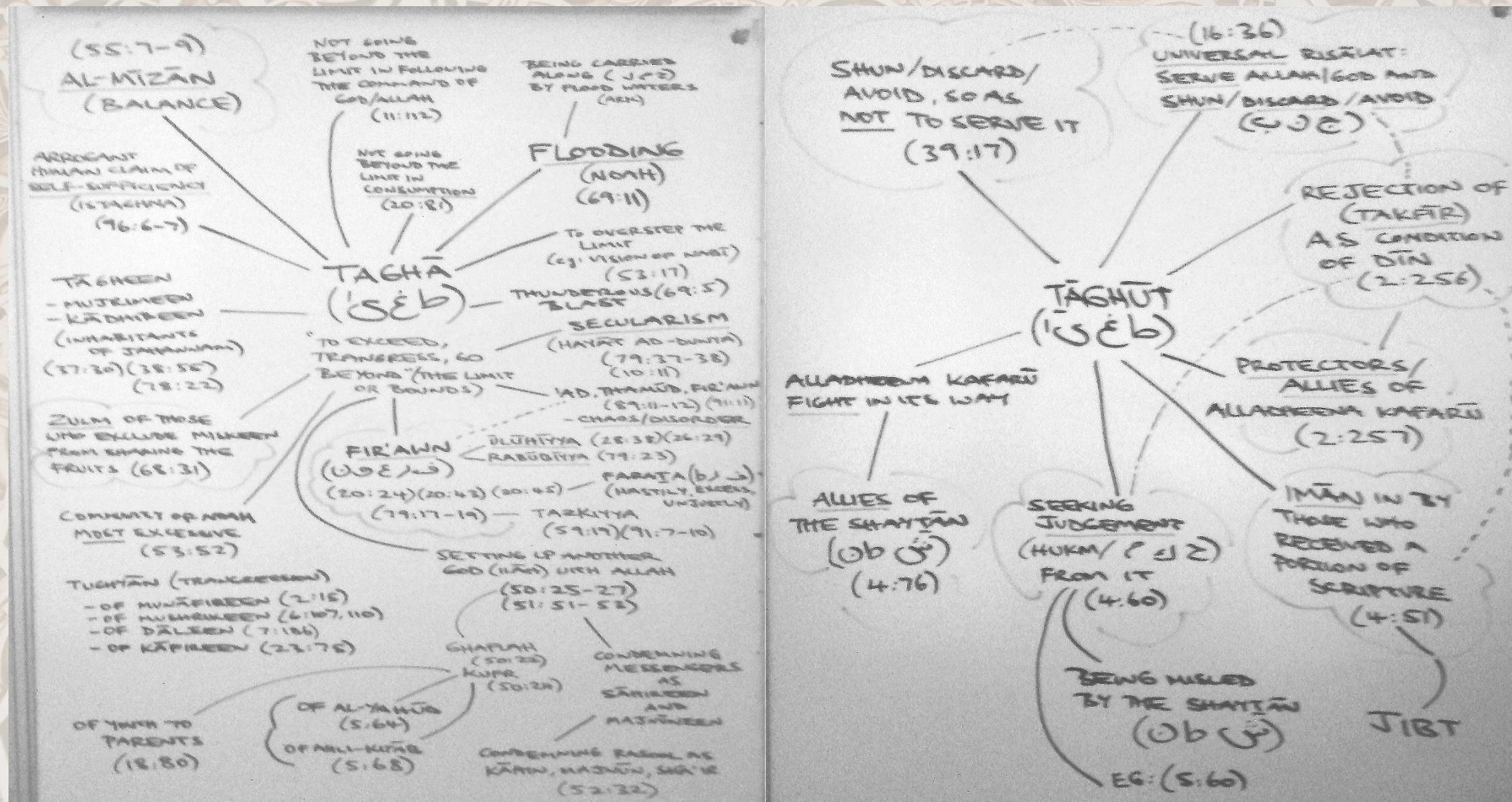
## The Qur'an

- maintains that it is the truth , and defines truth in terms of that which persists and benefits people (13:17)
- maintains that it was revealed / sent down in truth (17:105)
- contains **allegories** (3:7)
  - Therefore, The Qur'an is (at least partially) **mythical** in content
- rejects the claim that it contains "tales of the ancients" (6:25)
  - Therefore, the myths of The Qur'an must be differentiated from **fabricated** mythology

In short, the myths contained in The Qur'an are both revealed and endorsed by The Divine; in this sense, Qur'anic myths are **true** as **narratives**, but **not** necessarily as **history**

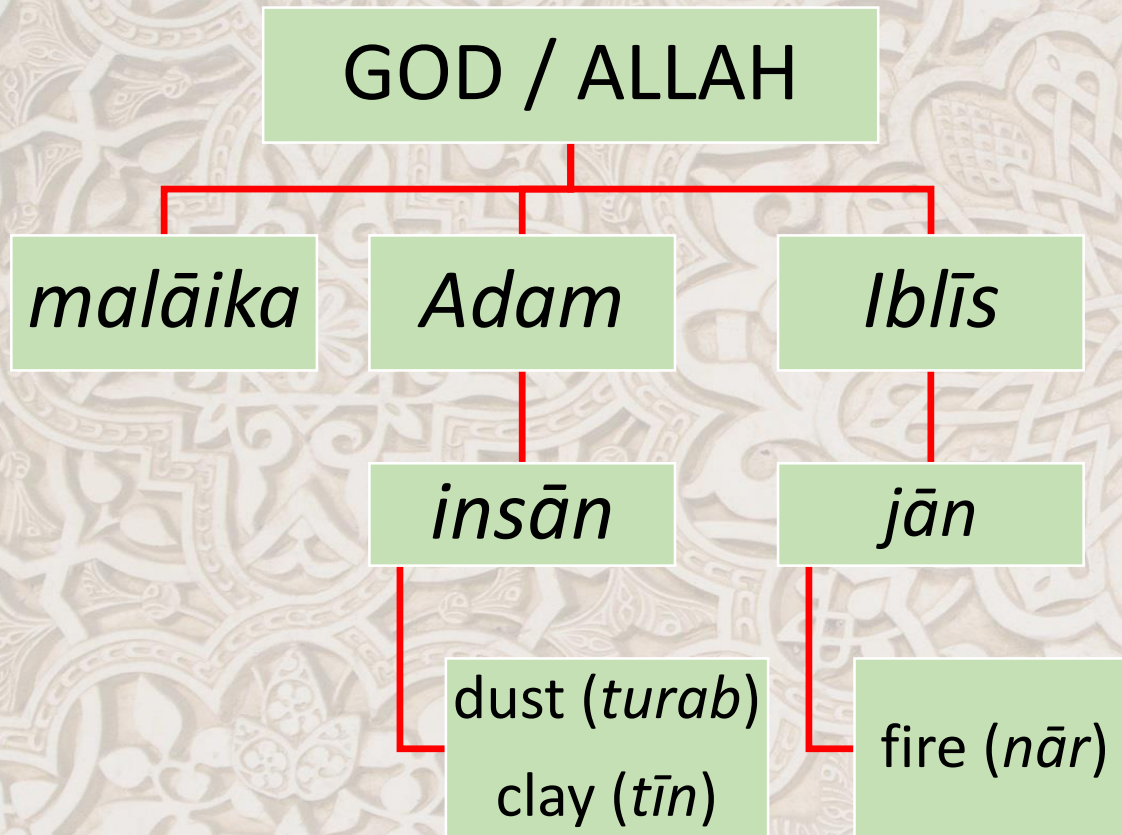


# Semantic Map – Tāghūt





# The Myth of Adam and Iblīs



God to place a **successor** on Earth

- successor to **previous inhabitants**
  - *Jinn* – shed blood (inferred from statement of *malāika*)
- *Jinn / jān* – created from fire
  - elusive & destructive capacity

God creates *insān* from dust, clay

- indicates humility, but also capacity for being moulded

God teaches Adam "the names"

Iblīs **refuses** to humble himself

- Claims **superiority** of fire over clay
- Masked "inferiority complex"
  - *balasa* – grief, despair, anxiety etc



# Islamic Decolonial Implications

White Supremacy / Racism / Modernity / Coloniality /  
The State are "false gods" (*tāghūt*)

The Qur'an **mandates** abandonment / shunning (*ijtināb*) and  
rejection (*takfīr*) of "false gods" (*at- tāghūt*)

- *There shall be no compulsion in the life-transaction / power-relation (**dīn**). The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever **rejects attachment with false gods** (*tāghūt*) and is securely attached with God / Allah has firmly grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And God / Allah is Hearing and Knowing (2:256)*
- And We certainly raised up in **every** community a messenger, [saying], "Serve God / Allah and **shun** false gods (*tāghūt*)"(16:36)
  - Cf. decoloniality as **delinking** (Mignolo 2010)



# Decoloniality and The Qur'an

## Examples



# The Colonial Matrix of Power



**"The Matrix is everywhere.** It is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth ... that **you are a slave. Like everyone else you were born into bondage.** Born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. **A prison for your mind."**



# The Meaning of Matrix

*Matrix.* In late Latin **Womb**, in older Latin pregnant animal, female animal used for breeding

**1.** The uterus or **womb**. Also occasionally used for ovary, especially with reference to oviparous animals

**2.a.** A place or **medium** in which something is 'bred', produced, or **developed**

**2.b.** A place or point of origin and growth

**3.a.** An **embedding** or **enclosing** mass; especially the rock-mass surrounding or adhering to things embedded in the earth, as metal, fossils, gems and the like

**4.a.** A **mould** in which something is cast or **shaped**

SOURCE: *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989)



# The Islamic Matrix

The equivalent word in Arabic is *rahimun* which, according to Lane, has the following meaning: “the **womb**, i.e. the **place of origin**, and **the receptacle** of the young in the belly.” Relatedly, *rahamun* means “the coming forth of the womb, in consequence of a disease.” *Haasatu rahimin* means “a feeling of relationship or consanguinity, or **sympathy of blood**.” *Rahaamatun* signifies “**being connected by relationship**”. *Rahmun* means “**relationship**, i.e. **nearness of kin ... and connection by birth**”.



# The Islamic Matrix

The Qur'an (39:6) refers to the "threefold depths of darkness" (*zulumātin thalāthin*) within the belly of the mother (*buth'ūni ummahātikum*)

The Qur'an refers to itself as a light (*nūr*) and a means by which man may be brought out of darknesses and into the light (2:257)

On this basis, we might conceive of **the human social environment as a womb-like environment**, the belly of a mother (*umm*) which is significant since the Arabic world for community is *ummat*

- In fact, and in accordance with the construct used in (39:6), society is not merely *a* mother, but *our* mother insofar as we identify ourselves with our cultures and civilisations



# The Islamic Matrix

Opening words of The Qur'an:

*Bismillāh ar-Rahmān ar-Rahīm*

Link forged between the first two 'names' (*asmā*) of God/Allah and the 'matrix' (womb) – *Ar-Rahmān, Ar-Rahīm, rahm*

Prophetic statement (*hadith*)

God said: "I am God and I am the All-Merciful. I created the **womb** (*rahm*) and I gave it a name **derived from** My own name..."

The womb as nourishing and protecting environment...

... God/Allah as **The Nourishing Protector**



# The Islamic Matrix

*Ar-Rahmān* is The One "Who **sustains and nourishes** you with His Munificence **by bestowing blessings for which you have not worked** like the light and heat of the Sun, light of the Moon, the rain and rivers which help to grow food, fruit trees not sown by you, milk from the breast of the mother, the intelligence to understand and master Nature, etc."

*Ar-Rahīm* is The One "Who **nourishes** you **by rewarding you many more times than you labour**. If you sow seeds of fruit like mangoes, oranges, apples, pears, yams, cocoa, groundnuts, etc. He produces for you a tree which bears hundreds of fruits for many years. If you sow an ear of corn or some wheat, a hundred ears of corn or wheat are produced. Your labour is so liberally rewarded as it makes your life easy and by thus amply rewarding you, He nourishes you." (Ajijola 1977, p.26)

SOURCES: Ajijola, A.D. (1977) *Qur'an in The Classroom*. Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd;  
Abdel-Haleem, M. (1999) *Understanding The Qur'an: Themes and Style*. London: I.B.Tauris Publishers;



# Sedimentation and The Racial Contract

*Do you not see that God / Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colours? And in the **mountains** are **tracts**, white and red of varying shades and [some] extremely black*  
(The Qur'an 35:27)

- Rain as symbolizing **revelation**
- Fruits of varying colours as symbolizing **diversity of human 'spiritual' capacity**
- Mountains as symbolizing **human leadership**
  - "*White* is the colour of peace, harmony, goodness and honour, *red* denotes danger and war, and *black* is the colour of evil and ignorance"

SOURCE: Vidyarthi, Abdul Haq (1995) The philosophy of colours in the Holy Qur'an.  
*The Light & Islamic Review* 71(4-6): pp.6-10, 4-6, 5-7



# Sedimentation and The Racial Contract

*Do you not see that God / Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colours? And in the **mountains** are **tracts**, white and red of varying shades and [some] extremely black (The Qur'an 35:27)*

- tracts as symbolizing **sedimentation**
- sedimentation as involving **pressure** over **long periods of time**
  - **Cf. naturalisation / depoliticisation** of social (power) relations
  - **"Epistemology of ignorance"** (Mills 1997)
    - *And when it is said to them, "Follow what God / Allah has revealed," they say, "Rather, **we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.**" Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided? (The Qur'an 2:170)*
    - *And be not like those who forgot God / Allah, **so He made them forget themselves.** Those are the defiantly disobedient (The Qur'an 59:19)*



# Modernity / Coloniality, Life & Death

*God / Allah is the ally of those who believe. **He brings them out from darkneses into the light.** And those who reject – their allies are Tāghūt. They **take them out of the light into darkneses.** Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein. (2:257)*

- Prophet Muhammad's opponents are described as serving an unjust / oppressive "false god" (*tāghūt*)
- God/Allah self-describes as The Light of the heavens and the earth (24:35), The Ever-Living (2:255) and giver of life **and** death
- Theological **dualism** is **rejected** (16:51)



# Modernity / Coloniality, Life & Death



Manichean dualistic division of colonial / modern world into zone of being / **life** and zone of non-being / **death** (Fanon)

- Metaphysical / ontological, yet **not** natural / given
- Colonial / modern "death world" as **idolatric** = a false god
- *O you who have believed, respond to God / Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to **that which gives you life**. And know that Allah intervenes between a man and his **heart** and that to Him you will be gathered. (8:24)*



# Geopolitics / Body Politics of Being

Geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge and being

- Critique of 'zero-point' philosophy
  - Modernity appears to refer to *time*; coloniality appears to refer to *space*
  - "What the concept of modernity does is to ingeniously **hide** the significance of **spatiality** for the production of this discourse"  
(Maldonado-Torres 2004, p.37)

Supremacism as **spatial-temporal** deceit (*ghuroor*)

- cf. *But Satan whispered to them to make apparent to them that which was **concealed** from them of their private parts. He said, "Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become **angels** (malakayn) or become of the **immortal** (khālidīn)"* The Qur'an (7:20)

SOURCE: Maldonado-Torres, Nelson (2004) The Topology of Being and The Geopolitics of Knowledge: Modernity, Empire, Coloniality. *City* 8(1): 29-56



# Decoloniality as Horizon

It is **not** an **interdisciplinary tool** but, rather, a **trans-disciplinary horizon** in which de-coloniality of knowledge and de-colonial knowledge places **life** (in general) first and institutions at the service of the regeneration of life (Mignolo 2010, p.11)

## ■ Cf. The Qur'an

*O you who have believed! Respond to God / Allah and to The Messenger when he calls you to **that which gives you life**. And know that God / Allah intervenes between a man and his heart and that to Him you will be gathered (8:24)*

*We will show them Our signs **in the horizons** and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness? (41:53)*

SOURCE: Mignolo, Walter D. (2010) Introduction: Coloniality of power and decolonial thinking. In *Globalization and The Decolonial Option*. Edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar. London: Routledge, pp.1-21.



# Universality as Pluri-versality

"A **truly universal** decolonial perspective **cannot** be based on an **abstract universal** (one **particular** that raises itself as universal global design), but would have to be the result of the **critical dialogue between** diverse critical epistemic / ethical / political projects towards a pluriversal as opposed to a universal world" (Grosfoguel 2011, page 3)

"Decolonization should aspire at the very minimum to restore a reality where racialized subjects could **give and receive freely** in societies founded on the principle of **receptive generosity**" (Maldonado-Torres 2010, page 114)

■ Cf. The Qur'an (49:13)

*O mankind! Indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may **mutually and reciprocally recognise one another**. Indeed, the most noble / **generous** / worthy of you in the sight of God / Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, God / Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.*

SOURCES: Grosfoguel, Ramon (2011) Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1(1): 1-37; Maldonado-Torres, N. (2010) On The Coloniality of Being: Contributions to The Development of a Concept. In *Globalization and The Decolonial Option*. Edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar. London: Routledge, pp.94-124.



# The Qur'an on Rootedness (*asala*)

In the Qur'anic worldview, human rootedness (*asala*) is grounded in **self-surrender** (*Islam*) to God / Allah, i.e. the human relation to The Divine is a life-transaction / power-relation (*dīn*)

- *There shall be no compulsion in the life-transaction / power-relation (*dīn*). The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever rejects attachment with false gods (*taaghoot*) and is securely attached with God / Allah has firmly grasped **the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it**. And God / Allah is Hearing and Knowing (2:256)*
- *Hold firmly to **the rope of God / Allah** all together and do not become divided... (3:103)*



# The Qur'an on Rootedness (*asala*)

In the Qur'anic worldview, lack of rootedness is **not** a **primal** condition, but rather a **derivative** state (uprootedness)

- *Have you not considered how God / Allah presents an example, [making] a **good word** is like a **good tree**, whose **root** is **firmly fixed** and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord. And God / Allah presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded (14:24-25)*
- *And the example of a **bad word** is like a **bad tree, uprooted** from the surface of the earth, not having any stability (14:26)*



# The Qur'an on Rootedness (*asala*)

Lack of rootedness is linked to forgetting / ignoring God/Allah – 'atheism' – which results in forgetting of 'self' (i.e. place in the ontological / cosmological order) and an 'atheistic' search for / creation of rootedness (or **concealment of uprootedness**)

- *And be not like **those who forgot / ignored God / Allah**, so He made them **forget / ignore themselves**. Those are the defiantly disobedient (59:19)*

Significantly, The Qur'an identifies the 'cause' of this forgetting with Satan (*ash-shaythān*), i.e. the alienated / alienating / distancing personality type

- *Satan has overcome them and **made them forget the remembrance of God / Allah...** (58:19)*



# An Epistemology of Ignorance

- Forgetfulness of coloniality / *damnation* = *will-to-ignorance*
  - "The forgetfulness of the damned is part of the veritable sickness of the West, a sickness that could be likened to a state of **amnesia** that leads to murder, destruction and epistemic will to power – with good conscience." (Maldonado-Torres 2004, p.36)
  - "**Epistemology of ignorance**"
    - White supremacy is maintained by an "**inverted epistemology**, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localised and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially **functional**)" which involve "white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and **self-deception** on matters related to race" (Mills 2007, pp.18-19)
    - **Subjects** whose **behaviour and practices** are **systemically racist** without being **explicitly intentional** (cf. Bonilla-Silva's "Racism without racists")

SOURCE: Mills, Charles (2007) White Ignorance. In *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, edited by Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana. Albany: SUNY Press, pp.13-38



# Rootedness *as* autochthony

Race and **autochthony** / **self-rootedness** based on Athenian myth according to which Erichthonius, the founder of Athens, was himself **self-generated from the earth**

- Cf. Qur'anic critique of self-causation / creation
  - *Were they created from nothing, or **were they the creators [of themselves]**? (52:35)*
  - *Did they create **the heavens and the earth**? Rather, they are not **certain** (52:36)*
    - "The **certainty** of the [colonial] **self** as a conqueror, of its tasks and missions, **preceded** Descartes certainty of the self as a thinking substance" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, p.245)
      - Conquest of the '**other**' (as **natural** sub-human) → thinking '**self**' (as **cultural** man)



# Rootedness *as* autochthony

Race and **autochthony** / **self-rootedness** based on Athenian myth according to which Erichthonius, the founder of Athens, was himself **self-generated from the earth**

- Cf. Qur'anic critique of self-causation / creation / sufficiency
  - *Are **you** harder to create, or **the heaven** that God / Allah built? (79:27)*
  - *[The rejector of God] sees himself as **self-sufficient** (80:5)(92:8)(96:7)*
    - Self-sufficiency as Eurocentric / modern / colonial **erasure** of the 'other'
    - Grounded in ego-centrism / egolatry, i.e. **white race as GOD**

SOURCE: Maldonado-Torres, Nelson (2007) On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of A Concept. *Cultural Studies* 21(2-3): p.245



# Idolatry as 'Egolatry'

According to the Qur'anic worldview, idolatry / fetishism is ultimately grounded in **self-deification** = **egolatry**

- *And when they see you, [O Muhammad], they take you not except in ridicule, [saying], "Is this the one whom God / Allah has sent as a messenger? He almost would have misled us from **our gods** had we not been steadfast on them." But they are going to know, when they see the punishment, who is farthest astray in [his] way. (25:41-42)*
- *Have you seen the **one who takes as his god his own desire?** Then would you be responsible for him? (25:43)*



# Idolatry as 'Egolatric' Classification

According to the Qur'anic worldview, egolatry functions through a process of 'naming', i.e. labelling / **classification**

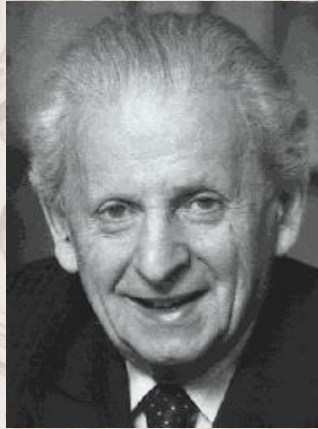
- *You do not serve besides Him (anything) except **names you have named, you and your fathers**, for which Allah has sent down no authority. Ultimate / final / absolute legislation is for none but God / Allah . He has commanded that you **serve none except Him**. That is the correct life-transaction / power-relation (dīn), but most of the people do not know. (12:40)*
  - "Politics of naming" as inter-generational 'legacy' project
    - **Signatories** and **beneficiaries** to "Racial Contract" (Mills 1997)
  - Cf. race *as* race-ing / competition / relay / "passing the baton" etc.



# The Search for Roots



Martin  
Heidegger  
Germanic  
Paganism  
Fascism



Emmanuel  
Levinas  
Talmudic  
Judaism  
Liberalism



Antonio  
Negri



Michael  
Hardt  
Roman  
Catholicism  
Communism



Slavoj  
Žižek  
Western  
Christianity  
Marxism

'The West' = Eurocentrism = Epistemic Racism = Modernity / Coloniality



# The Search for Roots

**ORTHODOXY**

**PAGANISM**

**CATHOLICISM**

**JUDAISM**

**CHRISTIANITY**

Europe / The West / Whiteness

Non-Europe / The Rest / Blackness

**ISLAM**



# Conclusion



# Islam as Counter-Supremacism

"Muslims are not alone in this struggle. They cannot continue to think that their fight is carried out to the back of the rest of the planet, or in terms of an **Islamic supremacy**. An ideology that separates the world between Islam and the West, or among believers and nonbelievers does not have anything to offer ... The **revolutionary potential of Islam has to be put to the service of humanity**, and **not to the service of the Islamic cause**. We have to think in terms of diversity and syncretism, not in terms of supremacy." (Prado n.d.)

SOURCE: Prado, Abdennur (n.d.) The Need for an Islamic Liberation Theology.