

### **3. Background and methods in the thought of Mohammed Arkoun**

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In the context of globalization, a transcultural perspective on justice is essential to understand how the idea of justice is conceived in other cultures and in other systems of thought. This second part of my study aims to theorize justice from an Arabo-Islamic perspective, focusing on the Maghrebian context and a postcolonial perspective. The study focuses on the contemporary intellectual project of Mohammad Arkoun, one of the key figures and pioneers of contemporary Islamic thought. Arkoun's intellectual project is relevant to several disciplines, including Islamic studies, history of Islamic thought, Islamic and/or Arabic philosophy, Qur'anic studies, and religious studies.

Arkoun's thought is important because it challenges both Muslim and non-Muslim perceptions of Islam. He opposes the fundamentalists and the orthodox frameworks by calling for a new understanding and reinterpretation of Islamic thought. His thinking also opposes the hegemonic constructions that give rise to Arab nationalism and Euro-modernism. Arkoun argues for the recognition of the diverse identities and cultural traditions that have shaped the Arab world. He also argues for a notion of justice expressed in equal participation in global intellectual and scientific production. His central project is based on an ethical humanist and cosmopolitan concept that promotes transcultural dialogue between cultures and religions. As a way of introducing Arkoun's thought, I first describe his life, work, and influence as an intellectual and researcher.

#### **Insights into the person, life and work of Mohammed Arkoun**

Mohammed Arkoun was born on February 1, 1928, into a poor family in Taurirt-Mimoun, a Berber/Amazigh village in the Great Kabylia, Algeria, which was already occupied by France at the time. His family led a traditional and religious life. During his first years of primary school, Arkoun left Kabylia and moved to a prosperous village of French settlers east of Oran, where he continued his primary education. Thanks to a scholarship, he graduated from high school and went on to study Arabic literature in Algiers. He also attended courses in law, philosophy, and geography, and studied

Arabo-Islamic philosophy. After leaving Algeria on the eve of the War of Independence, he continued his studies in Arabic language and literature at the Sorbonne, graduating with honors in 1956. He established himself academically in 1986 with his dissertation on Miskawayh, entitled *Contribution à l'étude de l'humanisme arabe au IVe/IXe siècle: Miskawayh (320/325-421) = (932/936-1030), Philosophe et Historien*. In his dissertation, Arkoun examines the multifaceted understanding of justice developed by Miskawayh as well as the intellectual impact of Greek philosophical thought on early Arabo-Islamic philosophy. It is this connection between Islamic tradition and Greek tradition that inspires the transcultural approach to thinking that is particular to Islamic thought.

In 1970 Arkoun started as a professor of Islamic history of ideas at the University of Vincennes (Paris VIII). In 1980 he became director of the Department of Arabic and Islamic History of Ideas at the Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris III) and editor of *Arabica*. From 1993 until his death in 2010, he was professor emeritus and visiting professor at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London.<sup>1</sup> He was also a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin (1986–1987 and 1990).

Arkoun's childhood and adolescent experiences in Algeria, as well as his studies in Paris, played a crucial, even decisive, role in shaping his thought.<sup>2</sup> Through this biographical account, I have explored three themes that emerge from his intellectual project and that I seek to explore in more detail below: the implicit demand for a concept of justice, the defense of religious and ethnic minorities, and the incorporation of transdisciplinary and transcultural approaches.

First, as I mentioned earlier, Arkoun grew up in Kabylia, an Algerian tribal region. His family belonged to a lower social class. In Algeria, he lived in a village on the edge of successive dominant cultures and political configurations. He lived in a remote village far removed from the center of Arabism and Islam.<sup>3</sup> As a result, his writing may reflect a notion of social justice that he seeks to defend in the face of what he recognizes as social discrimination in order to assert the rights of minority social groups. Arkoun's call for a rethinking of Islamic thought, the main feature of his thought, is based on an ethical notion of justice. In this context, Arkoun's intellectual project can be seen as fundamental to the assertion of women's rights in Islam. This explains the feminist reception of Arkoun's thought as found in the work of Margot Badran, Raja Rhouni, and Malika Zeghal. Drawing on the work of these Muslim feminists, I show how Arkoun's thinking leads to the development of a concept of gender justice as a shared intellectual inquiry between him and Fatima Mernissi.

1 Günther 2004 a: 127–128; Günther 2013: 63.

2 Günther 2019.

3 Lee 1994: viii.

Second, Arkoun is affected by sense of diaspora. Arkoun is a Berber/Amazigh Muslim philosopher. Diaspora<sup>4</sup> is defined as the feeling of not belonging in the country where you were born and where you have your roots and identity; the feeling of being different and out of place because one has a different identity. Similar to Jacques Derrida, who is an Arab-Algerian, Jewish, and Francophone scholar, Arkoun is a Berber-Algerian, Muslim, and Francophone intellectual. I compare Arkoun to Derrida because the latter is a major influence on Arkoun's contemporary thought project. Arkoun's diaspora is crucial for his formation of a concept of justice in transcultural and postcolonial philosophical research. Arkoun lived under Algeria's Arab nationalist discrimination and French colonization. Subsequently, he learned what it was like to be an immigrant in France. He was exposed to the contempt of the Berber population in Algeria because he was neither an Arabophone nor a Franco-phone.<sup>5</sup> As a native Berber speaker, Arkoun learned French as a second language and then Arabic as a third.<sup>6</sup> In fact, he had to learn two languages at the same time in order to gain social status and communicate outside the Berber regions. At the same time, he had to overcome two systems of oppression: French colonial rule, which affected the entire population of Algeria – Berber and Arab – and the exclusion of Berber's population social rights, which was expressed in the ideologies of the Algerian national and political system. Thus, Arkoun experiences the phenomenon of Arabo-centrism, colonialism and Western hegemony. Moreover, he had to deal with the conflict of different social statuses between Arab and Berber Algerians.<sup>7</sup>

One might argue that Arkoun's intellectual thought is characterized by the development of concepts concerned with the critique of the hegemonic discourse of religion and politics. He confronts orthodoxy, which is supported by Muslim and non-Muslim perceptions of and approaches to Islam, as well as the Arab nationalist discourse that has taken root in several postcolonial Arab countries. Berber Muslim intellectuals, for example, have sharply attacked Arab nationalism and religious fundamentalism in Algeria. In their view, Arab nationalism and religious fundamentalism are responsible for the imposition of orthodoxy and the exclusion of Berber

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4 In his book *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (2008), Robin Cohen points out four phases from which a definition of diaspora emerges. In the context of my claim that Arkoun was affected by the sense of diaspora, I refer to the third phase, which has been influenced by poststructuralist readings and social constructionists who argue that the concept of diaspora in a postmodern world encompasses more than the loss of home belonging and is not limited to the loss of ethnic or religious affiliation, but also includes a sense of identity. In the postmodern world, the very concept of identity has been deconstructed to affirm a form of diaspora (See: Cohen, Robin (2008). *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, second edition. Taylor and Francis e-Library: Routledge: London).

5 Günther 2004a: 127.

6 Lee 1994: viii.

7 Günther 2004 a: 127.

rights in Arab countries. They demand that their language and culture be recognized that they be allowed to participate in political life, that discriminatory laws be renounced, and that resources be distributed equally.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Arkoun's intellectual project introduces a subdivision of the traditions, ethnicities, and identities of the Arab world. For example, Arkoun uses the terms "Islamic context" or "Muslim context" to refer to Muslims living in Arab countries. Using these terms, Arkoun also considers different cultural traditions and civilizations related to the Islamic religion. Moreover, both terms refer to Muslims living in non-Arab countries such as Turkey, Iran, and Europe. In fact, Arkoun wants to challenge the normative and fixed classification of the Arab-Muslim world and argues that not all Muslim philosophers are necessarily Arabs and not all Arab philosophers are Muslims, but that there are Arabs who are Jews and Arabs who are Christians.<sup>9</sup>

Third, Arkoun gave seminars in Arabic and Islamic philosophy and history of ideas at the university of Vincennes-Saint-Denis. This intellectual experience had a decisive influence on the critical development of his thought. The university of Vincennes is known as one of the "avant-garde" universities in France. It had the ambition to create a new form of pedagogy, to teach new contents, to become transdisciplinary and open to the world.<sup>10</sup> Arkoun was welcomed as a lecturer at this university, because as a Muslim thinker, he presented early Arabo-Islamic thought to a Western university. This fosters a transcultural philosophical debate alongside the Western school of thought. Arkoun, thus, fuses philosophical concepts and ideas from the East and the West, making his thought extremely attractive for transcultural dialogue.

In addition, poststructuralist scholars such as Derrida also taught at the university of Vincennes.<sup>11</sup> Derrida's thought never fit into an institutional scheme. Throughout his life and in many different forms, Derrida aimed to expose and dismantle or deconstruct the oppressive domination that he believed was inherent in all institutions.<sup>12</sup> Derrida's poststructuralist thought influenced Arkoun in developing his critique of orthodoxy in Islam. This is crucial, considering that Arkoun invokes a normative theoretical foundation of Islamic ethics by deconstructing the orthodox and hegemonic reinterpretation of Islamic thought. The philosophical school of Vincennes continues to be inspirational and widely used by critical theorists in gender studies and political thought. In addition, it is taken as a basis

8 Layachi 2005:196.

9 Dübggen 2020: 893.

10 Soulié 1998: 48–49.

11 Soulié 1998: 49.

12 Borradori 2008: xi.

by postcolonial theorists to critique hegemonic discourse on language, culture, identity, gender, history, and politics.

In this context, one might suggest that Arkoun's thought is situated within the framework of postcolonial studies and critical theory because he challenges certainties and transcends the boundaries of the established understanding of Islam. Arkoun understands Islam not as a monolithic and homogeneous discourse, but as open to further reinterpretation. In his writings, Arkoun transcends the boundaries of Islamic studies by employing methods that are not traditionally considered part of Islamic studies. As a result, his concepts of and approaches to thinking are associated with the methods of poststructuralist criticism in Islamic studies.<sup>13</sup>

Postcolonial thought in the context of contemporary Arabo-Islamic thought is, thus, defined by three features expressed in Arkoun's intellectual project: Critique of orthodox religious discourse, critique of Arab nationalism, and critique of Euro-modern capitalism. These notions of critique are explored in my analysis of Arkoun's contemporary intellectual project, as I highlight in the following account of the structure of my study.

### Structure and outline of the study

The first chapter deals with the Islamic concept of justice according to the Muslim philosopher Miskawayh (d. 1030). First, I examine the multi-faceted ethical concept of justice according to Miskawayh by focusing on his book entitled *The Refinement of Character* (2002). Arkoun does not conceptualize justice himself, but engages extensively with Miskawayh's ethical theory and his respective concept of justice early in his career. I present Arkoun's reinterpretation of Miskawayh's concept of justice based on his dissertation entitled *Contribution à l'étude de l'humanisme Arabe Au IVe/Xe siècle: Miskawayh philosophe et historien* (1970). Arkoun states that Miskawayh's idea of justice is developed through the connection between the ethical Islamic tradition and the Greek tradition.

The connection between the Islamic and Greek traditions that shaped Miskawayh's thought is used by Arkoun through an interpretive method to highlight his notion of philosophical humanism. Arkoun focuses on Miskawayh's humanistic approach, which has been previously neglected in scholarship, to uncover the transcultural approach that drove Miskawayh's thought. In early Arabo-Islamic thought, the concept of humanism indicated an openness to foreign philosophical traditions and a concept of transcultural dialogue beyond Arabic-centric and Islamic thought. The humanist approach also represents the approval of rational thought. In this sense, one could argue that Arkoun's rereading of Miskawayh's thought is important for today in order to translate and situate ethical-philosophical discourse in a

13 Günther 2004a: 125.

transcultural approach and to unite an epistemic dialogue between East and West in the process of globalization.

The second chapter is divided into three sections. This chapter explains Arkoun's method of providing heterogeneous and multifarious interpretations of Islamic thought, as well as the criticisms he makes of homogeneous and monolithic interpretations. The methods he uses to rethink "Islam as a cultural and religious system"<sup>14</sup> are influenced by early Islamic philosophy and poststructuralist Western philosophy. Thus, the first section is devoted to Arkoun's reinterpretation of the early Islamic philosophy of Al-Amiri (d. 992), focusing on Al-Amiri's method for interpreting Islamic thought. The focus is on Arkoun's article entitled "Logocentrism and Religious Truth in Islamic Thought: The Example of al-*Ilam bi manaqib al-Islam* [An exposition on the merits of Islam]" (2002).<sup>15</sup> Before I present the outline of this chapter, I would like to highlight the following ideas.

I note that Arkoun focuses on Persian philosophers in his respective method of rereading of Islamic thought. To me, this has an attractive intellectual significance. I understand that Arkoun wants to open the field of Islamic studies to connect and exchange with other philosophical traditions. If one looks into Arkoun's intellectual project, one can discover the thought of philosophers who come from Persia – modern-day Iran. Yet these philosophers belong to a different cultural tradition, which is not Arabic, and to a different religious tradition, which is not the Sunni religious

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14 Günther 2013: 65.

15 In 2002, Arkoun compiled eight of his seminal articles into an interesting English book entitled *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (2002a), which I refer to in this second part of my study to introduce Arkoun's contemporary intellectual project. In this book, Arkoun seems to address his thoughts to international readers. Arkoun's eight essays, reflecting a lifetime in the field of Islamic studies, cover a variety of topics that encompass Islamic thought: Qur'anic studies, revelation, faith, authority, power, law, and civil society (see: Ameer U. Shaikh (2002): *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, Mohammad Arkoun, London: Saqi Books, 2002, 352 pages; a review in The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 21:1 (pp. 100–102)).

I focus on this book because the most groundbreaking concepts and themes that Arkoun elaborated throughout his intellectual career are presented in this collection of articles, from his reactivation of early Islamic philosophy, his critique of Orientalist methods, and his re-thinking of Islamic discourse and reason to his development of a concept for interreligious dialogue. In this study, which deals with Arkoun's intellectual project, I also refer to articles he wrote in French at the beginning of his intellectual career and others translated into English between 1973 and 2007. There is a German translation of some of his articles collected in a book entitled *Der Islam: Annäherung an eine Religion* (1999) introduced by Gernot Rötter und translated by Michael Schiffmann. These articles were also published in an English collection of articles under the title *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers* (1994), translated by Robert. D. Lee.

tradition. Miskawayh, for example, had been a Zoroastrian and converted to Shi'ite Islam.

With this in mind, I interpret Arkoun's intellectual strategy of uncovering Persian philosophy as meaning that Arkoun wants to shed light on the unconventional school of Islamic thought, although Miskawayh's ethical project is considered groundbreaking in the field of Islamic ethics. Arkoun aims to counteract the intellectual dominance of Arabian thinkers by giving Persian philosophical tradition an intellectual voice.

Following this line of thought, one could affirm that Arkoun aims to bridge different Islamic traditions and shed light on the richness of Islamic heritage beyond the religious and political conflicts that characterize the relationship between Muslims of various religious sects today. Arkoun also addresses Western readers by presenting a notion of cultural and religious diversity rooted in Islamic culture that might be attractive to someone interested in the field of Islamic studies. In this context, the second chapter takes a closer look at the Islamic thought of Al-Amiri (d. 992) as interpreted by Arkoun.

Arkoun's rereading of al-Amiri project exposes al-Amiri's transdisciplinary, comparative, and rational methods. These methods of thought, established in early Islamic thought, are important in the field of Islamic studies in our day to reconcile the disciplines of philosophy and religion. In this regard, for Islamic thought to be rational, it must be viewed anew through the lens of philosophy. The thought of al-Amiri was attractive to Arkoun for showing that Islamic philosophy embodied a reconciliation between rational and religious thought. Arkoun wished to highlight Al-Amiri's intellectual genius in offering a rational method and a transcultural approach to the study of Islam. Al-Amiri and his contemporary Miskawayh were willing to engage in an intellectual dialogue with Greek philosophy in order to harmonize Greek thought with Islamic ethics.

Al-Amiri's rational philosophical and transcultural approaches are certainly crucial to Arkoun's contemporary thought. Like al-Amiri, Arkoun draws on Western philosophical thought to rethink Islamic thought, and he reconciles the fields of humanities and philosophy to improve the field of Islamic studies. During his intellectual career, Arkoun drew inspiration from various philosophical schools of thought, such as the secular modern thought of the Enlightenment, the skeptical methods of thought, the hermeneutic school of thought, and the poststructuralist school.

As mentioned earlier, Arkoun was an Algerian-North African intellectual who grew up in Islamic culture and religion and later became acquainted with French culture and intellectual thought. Throughout his life and intellectual career, Arkoun engaged in an intellectual discourse on Islam with French readers under the influence of the French language and both humanist Islamic and poststructuralist French thought. One of his focuses was to examine the ways in which Muslims in North America and Europe present Islam to non-Muslim publics, as well as the ways in

which Muslims living in Muslim societies must deal with dictatorships, and with traditional and patriarchal sociopolitical and religious challenges. To counter these confrontations, which are directed against Islam as a culture and religion, Arkoun outlines a discourse of humanistic Islam that contradicts the image of a violent, terrorist, and fundamentalist Islam.

For this reason, his thought remains attractive in this post-revolutionary era to critique orthodox Islam and fundamentalist discourse in the Arab world and European countries. Arkoun familiarized himself with modern rationalist and critical poststructuralist methods of thought. In this contemporary intellectual project, Arkoun sought a radical reform of Islamic thought to free it from fundamentalism and orthodox manipulations, but less in the spirit of early Muslim thinkers such as Miskawayh and Al-Amiri. He analyzes Islam in purely rational and poststructuralist philosophical terms.

Sections two and three of chapter two introduce Arkoun's innovative method of deconstructing Islamic thought. Section two presents Arkoun's method of applied Islamology, which was introduced in 1973. Arkoun proposes his method of applied Islamology as a critical modern analysis for Islamic studies. Applied Islamology is critically directed against classical Islamic studies and Orientalist methods, which Arkoun believes are incapable of developing a study that can respond to the challenges facing most Muslim societies today.

To make this clear, the section begins by presenting the main features of applied Islamology. It exposes the discourses of classical Islamic studies that applied Islamology critically examines. The various articles I focus on to explore Arkoun's method of applied Islamology include his introduction in his book *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (2002a) and his article entitled "The Answers of Applied Islamology" (2007). In these materials, Arkoun develops his concept of applied Islamology in line with the current methods of poststructuralist thought. He urges the establishment of a discourse called the "discourse of the science of man and society,"<sup>16</sup> which aims to understand and interpret Islamic thought in relation to the development of most Muslim societies and the social challenges faced by most Muslim individuals. To this end, Arkoun proposes the dialectic of the thought and the unthought. The unthought is the sphere of prohibition, which to human thought is forbidden to understand. The unthought is that which traditional human societies block out and refuse to think about. In contrast to the unthought, the thought with its critical methods makes the unthought clear and reveals its forbidden perspectives. Arkoun uses this controversial dialectic to make the unthought, which is obscured by traditional culture, critically accessible to human thought.

Among the unthought perspectives that the discourse of the science of man and society seeks to critically improve is the situation of women in most Muslim soci-

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16 Arkoun 1985 a.

ties. In this regard, the second section of chapter two highlights the relevance of the method of applied Islamology for Muslim feminist thinkers who use Arkoun's method of thought to evaluate and deconstruct concepts associated with the tradition of women's subordination in Islam. Arkoun considers the Qur'an as a spoken discourse first that was then transformed into a written text. For Arkoun, the manifestation of the Qur'anic text during that process of transformation was prepared and strongly influenced by socio-cultural conditions and political ideologies. Thus, he sees the Islamic law of Shari'a as a legal text, derived primarily from the Qur'an, which can be questioned and needs to be deconstructed with a critical framework in order to find plausible interpretations that advocate greater justice for women. As Katharina Völker argues, Arkoun's "application of concepts such as demythologization, deconstruction, rationalization and historization to the Qur'anic text earned him frequent accusations of heresy."<sup>17</sup> In other words, his thinking about the Qur'an is at odds with reformist and conventional theological understandings of Islam that avoid critically questioning how the Qur'an went from revelatory speech to written text.

In this line of thought, the third section of the second chapter presents how applied Islamology engages in shaping various traditions related to Islam based on a critical and deconstructive analysis of the Islamic legacy. The focus is on Arkoun's article "Rethinking Islam Today" (2003) and other articles in his book *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers* (1994). In *Rethinking Islam*, Arkoun defines various concepts related to Islamic studies such as Qur'an, revelation, and Tradition. He examines these concepts using the poststructuralist methods of Michel Foucault's "epistème," Gilles Deleuze's "difference," and Jacques Derrida's "deconstruction" to reveal a multifarious understanding of Islamic legacy beyond a monolithic interpretation. Arkoun refers to the notion of exhaustive tradition, which is an ethical approach because it confirms the pluralistic and discursive cultural traditions in Islam. The exhaustive tradition affirms the right of excluded traditions of Islam to have their say and contributes to the reconstruction of multicultural Islam.

The third chapter deals with Arkoun's critique of the hegemonic discourse shaped in the spheres of religious, nationalist, and Western thought. First, Arkoun states that hegemonic discourse formulates orthodoxy through the manipulation of Islam in two stages: the stage of the Qur'anic fact and that of Islamic fact. Qur'anic fact is the oral revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad. At this stage, the Qur'an is sacralized without considering the possibility of distinguishing between the rational, which individuals can accept with their minds, and the mythical, which represents the Almighty.

The second stage is that of Islamic fact. This stage presents the collection and canonization of the Qur'an in a book called the *Muṣḥaf*. In this stage, the Qur'an

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17 Völker 2014.

served as a pretext for the emergence of a socio-political context. Various aspects of Islamic fact are selectively used by orthodoxy for power-political purposes. Arkoun's distinction between these two stages aims to argue that Islam turns into a powerful and hegemonic discourse because it is reconstructed by official religious scholars to serve political purposes and orders. Arkoun's thinking aims to liberate Islam from hegemonic constructions by making it open to a range of interpretations and realizations.

Second, Arkoun claims that the hegemonic discourse is established by the Arab nationalism discourse in both Islamic fundamentalist and secular positivist ideologies. On the one hand, Islamic nationalism identifies Islam as the only religion of Arabs, followed by the Arab nation, which is the only ethnicity, and the Arab language, which is the only language. Arkoun believes that Islamic nationalism restores the concept of ummah – the community of Muslims – but in the process erases other religions such as Judaism and Christianity, which are also widespread in the Arab world. Islamic nationalism also denies the different cultural customs and languages spoken in Arab countries. The renewal of the concept of ummah in most postcolonial Muslim societies cannot take place without the promotion of democratic rules that defend pluralism and a justice that preserves human dignity. On the other hand, the positivist nationalist discourse promotes the idea of modern and secular societies, but in doing so, positivist nationalism denies the religious fact and neglects democratic rules to be functionalized with a notion of secularity. For Arkoun, religion is an essential part of human society and cannot simply be denied. Arkoun's goal is to make religion a discipline and a field of study that allows for the deconstruction of religion from orthodoxy and fundamentalism.

Following Arkoun's critique of radical Islamism and secularism within the hegemonic discourse of nationalism, I present Arkoun's concepts of secular humanism and intellectual modernity, which he offers as a critique of the concept of radical or militant secularism and Euro-modernism. Arkoun's concept of secular humanism preserves the individual's right to criticism, freedom of thought, and respect for different religious beliefs, thus, defending pluralism. Arkoun's concept of intellectual modernity is presented as a critique of the centrism of Euro-modernism, manifested in a capitalist agenda in which the globe is characterized by a hegemonic rupture between center and periphery. One of Arkoun's critiques of the capitalist structure aims to challenge the economic consumption and passivity of most Muslim societies, as well as the domination of developed countries in the distribution of economic and cultural sources. Arkoun calls for global participation in scientific research and economic development, as well as equitable distribution of goods. This would be plausible as part of a global or transcultural debate that emphasizes solidarity, global justice, hospitality, and religious tolerance.

Chapter four discusses Arkoun's concept of emerging reason. Emerging reason calls for an abolition of the binary division of the globe into the periphery and the

center within the dominant ideologies and systems of thought, and presents instead a project of solidarity that aims to create a dialogue between cultures. This chapter concludes with a discussion of Arkoun's new ethos expressed in terms of individual autonomy, community, and cosmopolitan thought. These concepts are essential to civil societies in which individuals' rights to freedom of thought and belief, tolerance, and respect for differences should be promoted. Arkoun advocates and defends the project of interreligious dialogue to combat religious fundamentalism and extremism, both of which continue to pose a threat to our societies today. This chapter is a synthesis of Arkoun's thought with the aim of establishing a link between all the previous chapters in order to shed light on Arkoun's ethical and humanistic thought. The conclusion ends with an evaluation of Arkoun's contemporary intellectual project to show the relevance of his thought to our times.

### **3.1 Mohammed Arkoun's rereading of the Islamic thought of Miskawayh (d. 1030): A multifaceted concept of justice<sup>18</sup>**

This chapter deals with the Islamic concept of justice according to the Muslim philosopher Miskawayh and the contemporary thinker Mohammed Arkoun. Justice in Arabo-Islamic philosophy describes how Muslim individuals should behave and treat each other. By definition, "justice is in accordance with the highest virtues which establish a standard of human conduct".<sup>19</sup> Humans are encouraged to adhere to a minimum standard of duties and to act in accordance with the divine virtues as much as possible.<sup>20</sup> The divine virtues are laid down in revelation—the Qur'an and Tradition, but Muslim philosophers have derived their concept of justice not only from Islamic sources but also from Greek and Persian philosophers.<sup>21</sup>

In this reflection, I would like to introduce the concept of justice according to the Muslim philosopher Ahmad ibn Muhammad Miskawayh (d. 1030). I chose Miskawayh because he is one of the most important Muslim philosophers to whom Arkoun devotes a study. In addition, as mentioned earlier, Arkoun did not develop an explicit concept of justice in his contemporary project. Early in his academic career, he dedicated his dissertation to Arabo-Islamic philosophy, entitled *Contribution à l'étude de l'humanisme arabe au IVe/Xe siècle: Miskawayh, philosophe et historien* (1970), and to

<sup>18</sup> This chapter is based on the following article: Karoui, Kaouther (2021): "The Theory of Justice between the Humanism of the Classical Muslim Thinker Miskawayh and the Contemporary Thought Project of Mohammed Arkoun". In Sebastian Günther Yassir El Jamouhi (eds.), *Islamic Ethics as Educational Discourse: Thought & Impact of the Classical Muslim Thinker Miskawayh* (d. 1030). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, pp. 321–336.

<sup>19</sup> Khadduri 1984: 107.

<sup>20</sup> Khadduri 1984: 107.

<sup>21</sup> Khadduri 1984: 107.