

referred to the doctrine of voluntarism as an early Islamic doctrine indicating that justice can be determined by reason. In doing so, I emphasized that humans are responsible for determining their behavior and choices, to make the point that Islamic ethics recognizes the value of human responsibility and self-determination. Consequently, voluntarism, which assumes that justice must be determined by human reason, is indeed feasible in terms of a humanistic and rational conception of justice as expressed in Islamic thought.

3.2 The method of applied Islamology: A transcultural and transdisciplinary key for the renewal of Islamic studies

This chapter examines Arkoun's method of applied Islamology as key to the renewal of Islamic studies. One can argue that Arkoun's contemporary thought project is characterized by transcultural and transdisciplinary methods, and, thus, represents a global intellectual project for the renewal of Islamic studies. Arkoun's project is transcultural because he combines different philosophical traditions of Islamic thought from the early Islamic philosophy of Al Amiri (d. 992)¹⁴⁵ and from Western poststructuralist thought.

I have chosen to address Arkoun's reinterpretation of al-Amiri's early Islamic thought in this chapter rather than in the first chapter, even though al-Amiri is an early Muslim philosopher, because in this chapter I focus on the methods Arkoun employs in his contemporary intellectual project to renew the field of Islamic studies. In this context, I argue that Arkoun develops his methods based on his interpretation of al-Amiri's work from early Islamic philosophy. Moreover, this chapter explores how Arkoun applies the poststructuralist methods of Foucault's *épistème*, Deleuze's difference, and Derrida's deconstruction as a deconstructionist analysis of Islamic archive – the Qur'an and Tradition. Arkoun's project is also transdisciplinary, combining multiple disciplines such as history, sociology, linguistics, and philosophy to examine Islamic thought.

This chapter is divided into three sections: The first section begins with an analysis of Arkoun's rereading and reinterpretation of al-Amiri's early Islamic thought. Arkoun examines three approaches to understanding al-Amiri's methods aiming to rethink Islamic thought, which I chose to name the transdisciplinary approach, the

¹⁴⁵ Abu'l-Hasan Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Amiri (d.381/992) is a Kurasanian philosopher. He is one of the immediate disciples of Al-Kindi (d.873). Al-Amiri was from eastern Iran and spent most of his life there. The titles of some twenty-five of al-Amiri's works are known, and of these six (or seven, depending on a contested attribution) are extant and have been published. *The most eloquent testimony to al-Amiri's views on reason and revelation is his best-known work, An Exposition on the Merits of Islam* (Rowson 2008: 405–406). Indeed Arkoun dedicated his subsequent study to that work.

comparative approach, and the rational approach. The transdisciplinary approach means combining several disciplines such as philosophy and religion. The comparative approach is the study of the similarities and differences between religions with the aim of finding criteria that unite them. The rational approach is the use of logic as a rational thinking tool to reinterpret Islamic thought. Hence, by analyzing Arkoun's relationship to al-Amiri's early work, Islamic studies can be subjected to the perspectives present in al-Amiri's early work.

The second section deals with Arkoun's method of applied Islamology. Applied Islamology combines different fields of research; it also establishes a link between Islamic thought and poststructuralist Western thought. The goal is to show that applied Islamology critically challenges the framework of the Orientalist-historical method for studying Islam. Unlike Orientalists who study Islam primarily from a historical perspective without examining its relationship to the present time or the process of Islamic thought, Arkoun views Islam as a discourse in development rather than a rigid discourse. It is a discourse in change and development according to the progress of man in society. This section ends by presenting an interpretation of Arkoun's intention in his use of the method of applied Islamology. An important implication of applied Islamology is to liberate Islamic thought from traditional and orthodox perspectives. Specifically, I examine how feminist Muslim scholars use Arkoun's critical method of applied Islamology as a new method for interpreting Islamic legacy to analyze patriarchal, Islamist, and nationalist discourses that paint a discriminatory picture of women in Islam.

The third section shows how Arkoun applies poststructuralist methods to deconstruct the Islamic archive – the Qur'an and the Tradition. Poststructuralist methods serve as the basis for introducing the concept of exhaustive tradition. This means that the deconstruction of the Islamic archive aims to create a subdivision of traditions in Islam rather than discussing a single tradition. The exhaustive tradition consists of discussing the marginalized traditions in most Arab-Islamic societies. It manifests itself as the concept of a cosmopolitan and global ethic for marginalized Muslim minorities to have their rights recognized and appreciated by policy makers.

The transdisciplinary, comparative, and rational approaches: Arkoun's rereading of the intellectual project of Al-Amiri (d. 992)

The purpose of this section is to show that early Islamic philosophy required a reinterpretation of Islam based on what I call transdisciplinary, comparative, and rational approaches. Arkoun's contemporary intellectual project is influenced by early Islamic philosophy, which shaped the progress in rethinking Islamic thought. The analysis of Arkoun's intellectual project involves a chronological study to go through all the concepts that characterize his thought. In doing so, I begin with his earlier work entitled "Logocentrism and Religious Truth in Islamic Thought: The Example

of *al-Ilam bi- manaqib al-Islam*” [An exposition on the merits of Islam] (1972–2002 a), in which Arkoun examines the thought of the Muslim thinker al-Amiri.

Transdisciplinary Approach: The possibility to reconcile philosophy and religion

Arkoun reminds us first and foremost of the purpose of his rereading of Al-Amiri’s intellectual project. He argues:

I wanted to react against the prevailing scholastic division of Islamic thought into a specialized disciplines (theology, philosophy, historiography, law, literature) without pointing out a more significant unifying differentiation, using the criteria of *epistémè* and discourse analysis.¹⁴⁶

One can understand that Arkoun draws on the thought of Al-Amiri to explore the transdisciplinary approach through the reconciliation between the fields of religion and philosophy. In this regard, Arkoun examines Al-Amiri’s argument about the plausible harmonization between the fields of philosophy and religion on two levels: First, the level of opposition means the reconciliation between two opposing disciplines to examine Islamic thought. There is the philosophical realm, which is called science (*al-’lam*), and the religious realm (*Islam*).¹⁴⁷ Or in other words, the intensity of opposition reveals the opposing characteristics of philosophy and religion. The goal of philosophy is to investigate and/or resolve questions about religion based on rational thought. In contrast, religion does not require reason, but faith and trust in religious scriptures.

Second, the level of harmonization involves the simultaneous use of philosophical and theological lexicons. According to Al-Amiri, Arkoun points out, the Qur'an contains both philosophical, in the sense of scientific or rational, vocabularies and religious vocabularies.¹⁴⁸ Hence there are parallel uses of rational and religious vocabularies in the Qur'an, as the following figures show: “Among the terms most frequently employed are *’aql* [reason] (40 occurrences), *’aqil* (14), *’ilm* [science] (46), and *sina'a* (in the sense of scientific technique) (49). In comparison, the terms used by al-Amiri are *din*, *adyan* [religion or religious] (43+55), *mila*, *milal* [sect or sects] (17), *’ibada* [acceptance] (32), *i’tiqad* [belief], *i’tiqadat* [convictions] (24), etc.”¹⁴⁹

By emphasizing that the Qur'an contains both scientific and religious vocabularies at the same time, one can argue that Arkoun is rereading Al-Amiri’s project

146 Arkoun 2002a: 32.

147 Arkoun 2002a: 180.

148 Arkoun 2002a: 180.

149 Arkoun 2002 a: 180.

to confirm the possibility of reinterpreting and explaining the Qur'an using rational methods. In this sense, "Al-Amiri attempted to reconcile religion with philosophy by arguing that a theological conclusion that is reached through philosophically correct procedure is the same as that directed by the religion of Islam."¹⁵⁰

Thus, Arkoun was interested in Al-Amiri's thought to show that it is not problematic to explain the Islamic sources using philosophical thought. Moreover, one can affirm that the reconciliation between the fields of philosophy and religion confirms the notion of a transdisciplinary approach that characterized Al-Amiri's thought in the 10th century. Thus, Al-Amiri's genius was to show that rational thought cannot contradict the revealed truths of Islam. Al-Amiri was concerned with showing how philosophy could be used to answer theological questions and how philosophy and Islam could be reconciled as complementary paths to truth.¹⁵¹ The possibility of interpreting Islamic sources with rational methods and the transdisciplinary approach that characterized Al-Amiri's Islamic thought influenced Arkoun's contemporary project, in which he argued for the possibility of establishing a link between different disciplines for the study of Islam. I will show this below.

Comparative approach: A harmony between different religions

The comparative approach evaluates the similarities and differences between religions. Rather than separating religions, the comparative approach identifies what religions have in common. The comparative approach is a means of the concept of interreligious dialogue. This requires bringing different religions together in a climate of dialogue to discuss concerns that might unite them. A fundamental aspect of Arkoun's intellectual project is his appeal for interreligious dialogue. In this regard, Arkoun examines Al-Amiri's reference to verse 17 of the 22 chapter of the Qur'an to show how this Qur'anic verse cites different religions and religious sects to argue that they share the same fate of God's judgment as a fundamental commonality between religions.¹⁵² The verse reads, "As for the believers, those who follow the Jewish faith, the Sabians, the Christians, the Magians, and the idolaters, God will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection; God witnesses all things."¹⁵³

For Arkoun, Al-Amiri uses two criteria to compare Islam with the religions mentioned in the verse. There is on the one hand the objective criterion, dealing with the characteristics that the monotheistic religions have in common. In this regard, Arkoun affirms "the term 'objective criteria' is used to mean all of the truths received

¹⁵⁰ Gaskill 1998: 207.

¹⁵¹ Rowson 2008: 407.

¹⁵² Arkoun 2002a: 186.

¹⁵³ The Qur'ān: Chapter 22 The Pilgrimage; Verse 17.

through 'common sense'.¹⁵⁴ Examples of these truths include: monotheistic doctrine, which postulates the existence of one God, a Revelation, angels, prophets, souls, etc.; and the necessity for Resurrection, for a distinction between true and false, good and evil, and, thus, a fundamental schism between believers and non-believers.¹⁵⁵ In religious discourse, the distinction between believers and non-believers raises the question of whether tolerance between the religious and the non-religious is possible, or whether it reproduces or exacerbates existing conflicts of religious intolerance. The subjective criterion refers to religious practices that differ between religions and distinguish one religion from another. Arkoun affirms that subjective criteria "expressed the moral values established by 'the experiences of the nations' and reinforced with the authority of the prophets, sages, mystics and great princes who had given them incisive formulations."¹⁵⁶

Interpreting Arkoun's intent behind his rereading of Al-Amiri, one could argue that Arkoun wants to show that Al-Amiri uses a comparative approach between religions by examining their convergence and divergence to resolve a conflict between different religious beliefs; Al-Amiri thereby calls for religious tolerance based on the objective criterion of monotheism. In our present time, it is imperative that we revive this tolerant tradition of Islamic thought in order to create societies that respects everyone's freedom, opinions and attitudes. As part of his intellectual project, Arkoun is committed to religious dialogue and the promotion of tolerance between religions.

Rational approach - The science of language (*kalam*): The opening of the gate of *Ijtihad*

Arkoun claims that Al-Amiri's thought is characterized by an epistemological criterion and a methodological criterion aimed at understanding and interpreting the religious language of Islam. First, the epistemological criterion, as Arkoun says, "emerges from the classification of the sciences. It confirms the well-known opposition between the philosophical sciences and the religious sciences, one using logic, the other language, as its instrumental science."¹⁵⁷

However, Arkoun affirms that Al-Amiri does not intend to make a disconnection between the two sciences of religion and philosophy.¹⁵⁸ This has already been explained above, where I argued that Al-Amiri's project is characterized by the com-

154 Arkoun 2002a: 187.

155 Arkoun 2002a: 187.

156 Arkoun 2002a: 188.

157 Arkoun 2002a: 189.

158 Arkoun 2002a:192.

bination of philosophy and religion and that one can interpret religious language with logic as a scientific and rational tool of thought appropriate to philosophy.

In this sense, Arkoun affirms that “Al-Amiri juxtaposes two theoretical discourses on logic and language, rather than comparing them and looking for common criteria.”¹⁵⁹ According to Arkoun, Al-Amiri applies logic as a philosophical science in the study of Islamic religious discourse to show how logic can be used to study language as a linguistic system that reflects religious discourse. Arkoun argues by defining logic and language:

On the one hand, logic is presented as a universal language of reason focused on eternal intelligibilities; on the other, language is conceived and practiced as the instrument for achieving and communicating the most nuanced, the most profound and the most unexpected meanings.¹⁶⁰

Given the symbolic, allusive, and enigmatic aspects of language, then, one could argue that logic is used as a rational tool to understand the enigmatic properties of language. Following Arkoun, logic is, thus, used for the rational interpretation of religious language. ‘Logic’ (Greek: *λογική, logikē*) is the formal, systematic approach to reasoning grounded in formative rules of definition, argumentation, validity, and fallacies developed by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in his work *Organon*.¹⁶¹

Second, Arkoun affirms “the methodological criterion is concerned with what technical procedures to employ to arrive at the desired truth.”¹⁶² By technical procedures, Arkoun means the religious sciences of *kalam* and *fiqh* that are aiming to examine the religious texts of the Qur’ān and Tradition.¹⁶³ In what follows, I discuss the science of language (*Ilm-kalam*) and Islamic legal theory (*fiqh*). This is important because Islamic legal theory is a hermeneutic system from which ethics and politics are to be prescribed. For Muslims, Islamic legal theory is a source of legislation.

As Arkoun tells us, the science of language (*Ilm-kalam*) “defends holy religion and enables the individual to join an élite that can reject or approve a thing with total clarity of vision.”¹⁶⁴

By the same token, one could argue that the science of language (*Ilm-Kalam*) is an approach by which Islamic reasoning is sought through Aristotelian dialectics. In Arabic, the concept of the science of language means knowledge about speaking. The science of language (*Ilm-Kalam*) in Islamic thought is based on the search for theological premises through debate and argumentation within the framework of ratio-

¹⁵⁹ Arkoun 2002a:192.

¹⁶⁰ Arkoun 2002a:192.

¹⁶¹ Aoude 2011:1.

¹⁶² Arkoun 2002a: 193.

¹⁶³ Arkoun 2002a: 193.

¹⁶⁴ Arkoun 2002 a: 193.

nal discussion. In short, the science of language is the science in which the Islamic legacy is understood not only within the framework of the Qur'ān or Tradition or the opinions of the first three generations of Muslims (7th century), but also through the reasoning of scholars. Thus, the science of language was the forerunner of the later stylized argumentation methodology called logic (*mantiq*), which was introduced by Aristotle, to denote the Islamic instrument of argumentation.¹⁶⁵ Put simply, Muslim scholars use Aristotelian logic to understand and interpret Islamic legacy. Based on Aristotelian logic, the science of the language of Islamic theology opens a door to the interpretation of Islamic heritage through intellectual reasoning and the formation of a theory of law termed Islamic legal theory (*fiqh*). In this regard, Arkoun argues:

(*fiqh*) is at it were 'an intermediary between the *hadith* and *kalam*', consisting in an effort of reflection (*ijtihad*) to distill from the texts those standards without which no royalty (*mulk*) is possible; and language, finally, is (as we have seen) the instrument used in these practices.¹⁶⁶

In other words, Islamic legal theory is to discover the law of God. Islamic legal theory is crucial because it is the law by which individuals behave in a manner that is acceptable to God. It serves the very purpose of finding the rules enacted by God. Islamic legal theory is meant to open the gate of Islam to *ijtihad*, the maximum effort of the jurist to master and apply the principles and rules to discover the divine law.¹⁶⁷ One can state that Islamic legal theory (*fiqh*) follows strict procedures to understand and interpret the case in question by the intellectual (*mujtahid*).¹⁶⁸

In this context, Arkoun claims that the principle of analogy (*qiyas*), as an instrument of Islamic legal theory, is the most controversial method among scholars to reach a consensus on a judgment. According to traditionalist Muslim scholars, the use of analogy (*qiyas*) is not permissible in either the Qur'an or the Tradition. Therefore, one should trust the Tradition as they were proclaimed by the companions of the Prophet, because they lived at the time of the Prophet and witnessed the circumstances of the revelation and the elaboration of the Tradition when they took place.¹⁶⁹

In the same line as Arkoun, Wael El-Hallaq explains how difficult it is sometimes to find consensus – accord – among scholars about a legal deliberation. El-Hallaq clarifies that the *mujtahid* can try to find the legal verdict in an unprecedented religious argument by using the procedure of *qiyas* (analogy). But before embarking on this task, he must first search for the legal judgment in the works of well-known

¹⁶⁵ Aoude 2011: 2.

¹⁶⁶ Arkoun 2002 a: 193.

¹⁶⁷ El-Hallaq 1984: 4.

¹⁶⁸ El-Hallaq 1984: 4.

¹⁶⁹ Arkoun 2002 a: 193.

jurists. If he does not find it in these works, he can look for a similar religious argument, where the consequences of a legal deliberation are different, but the causes of the legal deliberation are the same. If he is unsuccessful, he must turn to the Qur'an, Tradition, or *ijma'* (consensus) to find a literal legal judgment as formed by the preceding jurists. In this case, the mujtahid must apply *qiyyas* (analogy) to see if this legal judgment is applicable to the religious case in question.¹⁷⁰

In the 8th century of Islam, the science of language as an equivalent of Greek logic was initially considered part of the foreign sciences; so much so that many traditionalists Muslim scholars refused to accept logic as something valuable for the development of Islamic philosophy and for the reinterpretation of Islamic law.¹⁷¹ I briefly introduce the work of Ruth Mas, who specializes in the study of Islamic philosophy with its early and modern traditions. She divides Islamic philosophy into two approaches of rational scholars who defend the use of the science of language to interpret Islamic thought by emphasizing the need to open the gate of *ijtihad* to interpret Islamic sources. Among these scholars, Mas introduces al-Farabi (d. 950). Al-Farabi is considered the first and greatest commentator on Aristotelian logic, a logician in his own right. Al-Farabi is considered one of the influential Muslim thinkers who helped introduce Aristotelian thought into Islamic literature.¹⁷² In contrast to al-Farabi, there is the approach of traditionalist Muslim scholars who reject logic and argue that it is an alien tool designed to eradicate the Islamic faith. Among these scholars, Mas mentions Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1263). Ibn Taymiyya is considered a dogmatic theologian and jurist who frequently made polemical accusations against Greek logic.¹⁷³ It is important to mention this intellectual conflict between earlier Muslim philosophers to show that al-Amiri, like his predecessor al-Farabi, is one of the defenders of reason in Islam. This intellectual conflict between the rational and the traditionalist scholars of Islam has not ended even in our time. This study addresses this issue and aims to revive the thinking of the rational thinkers of Arabo-Islamic philosophy within the early and modern/postmodern schools.

I shall now outline the rational approach I take following Arkoun's interpretation of al-Amiri's position on logic as a rational method for interpreting Islamic thought. One can argue that al-Amiri defends a rational approach based on epistemological and methodological criteria to interpret the Islamic legacy. The epistemological criterion requires the study of the Islamic legacy through the approaches of philosophy and religion. According to the methodological criterion, the Islamic legacy is under-

¹⁷⁰ El-Hallaq 1984: 4.

¹⁷¹ Aoude 2011: 2.

¹⁷² Mas 1998: 114.

¹⁷³ Mas 1998: 122.

stood through the categories of the science of language (*'Ilm-kalam*) and Islamic legal theory (*fiqh*), using analogies from this theory.

One can further observe that Arkoun draws on al-Amiri's intellectual project because Arkoun subjects Islamic thought to rational interpretation. Arkoun combines several disciplines to examine Islamic thought. He also supports a project of solidarity between religions. Like al-Amiri, Arkoun is open to other traditions and schools of thought to provide a rationalist interpretation of Islam. As a Muslim scholar who has studied, taught, and lived in Paris, Arkoun draws on the intellectual perspective and achievements of contemporary Western philosophy, which include an emphasis on human reason as opposed to dogmatic religious belief and the application of poststructuralist methods. In this sense, Arkoun's approaches to reinterpreting Islam converge with the rationalism of Descartes, the critique of Kant, the structuralism of Saussure, Barthes, and Hjemslev, and the semiotics of Greimas.¹⁷⁴ Arkoun also drew inspiration "from the methods of Paris School poststructuralism."¹⁷⁵ It was Claude Cahen, a member of the French *Annales* school,¹⁷⁶ who introduced Arkoun to the ideas and concepts of the *Annales* schools of historians.¹⁷⁷ Thus, Arkoun critically engages with various belief systems, traditions of exegesis, theology, and jurisprudence in order to liberate Islamic thought from dogmatic paradigms.¹⁷⁸ Arkoun seeks to subject Islamic thought to historical critique in order to strip it of the sanctity and grandeur associated with it.¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, there is also a pragmatic shift between Al-Amiri's and Arkoun's thought project. Arkoun's thought is in flux. It evolves in line with intellectual, political, social, and cultural changes in contemporary Muslim and European societies. Arkoun also argues for poststructural and deconstructivist methods to rethink Islamic thought. Arkoun's critical thinking about Islam goes beyond the rationalist approaches that characterized early Islamic and Greek thought, for he seeks a radical reform of Islamic thought.

In the following, I present Arkoun's method of applied Islamology. The aim is to show that applied Islamology emphasizes transdisciplinary, transcultural, rational

174 Soekarba 2006: 80; Khalil and Khan 2013: 35.

175 Soekarba 2006: 80.

176 The *Annales* school emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. It was one of the most important currents in the study of history, not only in France but also in many other parts of the world. In the *Annales* school, history was studied with an emphasis on interdisciplinary research with other social sciences. Instead of focusing on events and telling the story of great personalities at the center of history, the *Annales* school emphasized the study of historical problems through investigation (see: André Bruguière: The *Annales* School: A New Approach to the Study of History, Odile Jacob: Paris/New York).

177 Günter 2004 a: 128.

178 Khalil and Khan 2013: 34.

179 Shiyab 2014: 406.

approaches as well as deconstructivist and emancipatory norms in order to liberate Islamic thought from orthodox perspectives.

Applied Islamology: A modern analytical criterion for the renewal of Islamic studies

This section examines Arkoun's method of applied Islamology as a modern analytical criterion for Islamic studies. First, the main features of applied Islamology are outlined. Second, the section introduces three types of discourse that reconstruct the field of Islamic studies. Third, the section examines the alternative discourse that Arkoun introduces to rethink the unthought sphere of Islamic thought. The section ends with an examination of the intellectual purpose beyond Arkoun's use of applied Islamology and rethinking Islamic thought: I situate Arkoun's thought within the perspective of feminism in Islam.

Carool Kersten, in his article "The Applied Islamology of Mohammed Arkoun" (2010), claims that Arkoun first introduced the concept of applied Islamology in 1973.¹⁸⁰ This is correct. However, one could argue that the final explanation of applied Islamology can be found in the introduction to Arkoun's book *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (2002 a). In this book, Arkoun presents a collection of eight articles he wrote in French in the 1970s and 1980s. These articles were translated into English in 2002, making the book accessible to a wider audience. In addition, Arkoun discusses his concept of applied Islamology in his final article, "The Answers of Applied Islamology" (2007). In this article, Arkoun provides a comprehensive explanation of his applied Islamology and its relationship to poststructuralist thought. Arkoun also points out some emancipatory implications that the applied Islamology approach brings to women's rights in Islam. I begin with an introduction to Arkoun's definition of applied Islamology as he presents it in the introduction to his book *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (2002 a). Arkoun defines applied Islamology in many systematic terms. I refer to his definition of applied Islamology as he explained it to avoid misinterpretation of his thought. In this context, Arkoun explains that applied Islamology

is a way of thinking, rather than essays in traditional scholarship based on primary sources. Not that I do not use such sources extensively, but my interpretation of them is informed by a strategy which differs from that usually employed for the purpose of providing a descriptive, narrative, factual and cumulative presentation of what they contain. My intention is to combine a critical review of modern studies devoted to early and contemporary periods of what is generally called 'Islam,' with the systematic deconstruction of the original texts used

180 Kersten 2010: 3.

in these studies as sources of genuine information. Primary and secondary texts are not read in order to discuss the facts themselves, but to **problematiser** the epistemic and epistemological framework underlying the articulation of each discourse. [emphasis in the original]¹⁸¹

To put it simply, applied Islamology contrasts with the descriptive and narrative methods of traditional scholarships, which neglect a critical approach to the study of Islam. In applied Islamology, the original text of Islam, the Qur'an, and Tradition are critically examined. An important goal of applied Islamology is to learn more about the socio-historical and cultural background that has shaped Islam. Moreover, Arkoun claims that his approach to applied Islamology is innovative in the field of Islamic studies. As a result, applied Islamology subjects Islam to historical epistemology and philosophical criticism when examining the history of Islam. Arkoun argues:

This cognitive strategy has never been used before in interpreting the types of discourse produced by Muslims to express their Islam, or in approaching them as a subject of study, alongside the Western literature on Islam and Muslim societies. From this perspective, **historical epistemology** has a priority over the purely descriptive, narrative presentation of what 'Islam' teaches, or what Muslims say, do or achieve as social and historical protagonists.... Such an itinerary can be proposed and achieved only by those who accept the need to combine respect for the rules of scientific research with the capacity to submit to philosophical criticism every stance of reason, every intellectual and every question arising therefrom. For a time, during the late 1970s, I called this approach 'applied Islamology' following the example set by a group of anthropologists who started the practice of 'applied anthropology'. [emphasis in the original]¹⁸²

This quote forms the basis of my strategy to introduce the method of applied Islamology in order to explore the fact that applied Islamology criticizes the Orientalist method; to show the alternative discourse that applied Islamology proposes; and to interpret the ethical purpose of applied Islamology by disapproving the patriarchal system that prevents women, minorities, and other socially oppressed groups from realizing their rights.

Scholars have commented on Arkoun's method of applied Islamology as follows: Kersten claims that applied Islamology is a critical modern analysis for Islamic studies.¹⁸³ "Applied Islamology was envisaged as an *epistemological* reflection that [aims]

¹⁸¹ Arkoun 2002a: 10.

¹⁸² Arkoun 2002a: 10.

¹⁸³ Kersten 2010: 4.

to: (1) critically re-read the so-called 'exhaustive Muslim tradition, free from the dogmatic definitions of the existing literature'; and (2) historicize contemporary Muslim discourse in order to unveil its ideological prejudices. Ideology critique is one of the major tasks of Applied Islamology, says Arkoun."¹⁸⁴ Kersten further explains that in elaborating the method of Applied Islamology, Arkoun was influenced by the achievements made in the Western human sciences during the twentieth century and by the Applied Anthropology (1971) of the French ethnologist and sociologist Roger Bastide (1998–1974).¹⁸⁵

Abu Zayd affirms that Arkoun establishes the approach of applied Islamology to call for abandoning the methods practiced by conformist and orthodox Muslim scholars to study Islam. Applied Islamology moves to an applied critical analysis of Islamic thought.¹⁸⁶ He further explains that applied Islamology aims to provide a critical analysis of religious texts in order to renew Islamic thought. It transforms Islamic discourse from a unified and systematic reading into different interpretations and from a conservative and traditionalist interpretation into a liberal and progressive interpretation.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, el-Ayadi affirms that applied Islamology deals with Islamic discourse according to the necessities of critical reason. It questions the construction of discourse; that is, any discourse that has become a dogmatic certainty.¹⁸⁸ Thus, applied Islamology subjects Islamic thought to critical scrutiny. It analyzes the representations and the discourses that construct Islam. In what follows, I explain what Arkoun means by Islamic discourses. What discourses is applied Islamology critical of? And what discourse does Arkoun propose as an alternative that is consistent with the critical method of applied Islamology?

Three categories of discourse: A tenuous and fixed study of Islamic Tradition

Islam consists of the Qur'an and Tradition. The majority of orthodox Muslim scholars interpret these texts in a way that cannot be critically analyzed or evaluated over time. In this regard, Arkoun, in his article entitled "Current Islam Faces its Tradition" (1985a), defines three discourses that stand for a monolithic study of the Tradition:

- 1) Current Islamic discourse, which tends to dominate all the others by its political power and great social and psychological scope. It is deeply rooted in the mythical dimension of the Tradition while unwittingly secularising the religious contents of that Tradition. 2) Classical Islamic discourse, which explains the Tradition in the period of its being formed and fixed in authentic texts. 3) Orientalist

¹⁸⁴ Kersten 2010: 4.

¹⁸⁵ Kersten 2010: 4.

¹⁸⁶ Abū Zayd 2006: 84.

¹⁸⁷ Abū Zayd 2006: 83.

¹⁸⁸ El-Ayadi 1993: 48–49.

discourse,¹⁸⁹ which applies to the forming and fixing stage a philological and historical critique, predominantly historicist and positivist and which belongs to the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁰

What these discourses have in common is that they have developed a rigid study of the Islamic Tradition that does not consider the socio-historical context in which it was developed. These discourses have also disconnected from the actual socio-historical changes in most Muslim societies. In what follows, I examine Arkoun's critique of the Orientalist methods of working on Islam. However, considering that Orientalism is a critical concept according to Edward Said and one of the frameworks for postcolonial theory, Arkoun was not a rabid critic of the Orientalist camp as inspired by Said and postcolonial theory. Arkoun directs his criticism primarily against the working methods of some Orientalists-historians who, he notes, fail to develop an evaluative and transdisciplinary approach that incorporates the sciences of man to study Islam, as practiced in his applied Islamology.

Applied Islamology: As critique of Orientalist method

Before discussing Arkoun's criticism of the Orientalist method, one can note that Arkoun's criticism of Orientalist historians cannot mask his praise for the intellectual achievements of classical Islamic studies developed in the West. Rather, Arkoun's main criticism is of the extravagance of pragmatic Islamology, which was pushed by a younger generation of Islamists with a background in social science rather than philology and which succeeded in marginalizing classical Islamology in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁹¹ In other words, Arkoun criticizes the method of Orientalist historians who attempt to study Islamic Tradition through narratives without recognizing how the earlier account of Islam is relevant to actual Islamic practices. In an article published in the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World under the title "Islamic Studies" (2009), Arkoun criticizes the Orientalist method by asserting:

Orientalism has accepted the traditional account of Muhammad's life, the articulation of the Qur'ān in Mecca and Medina, and the early formation of the Muslim community (...). Radical source criticism of the Qur'ān and other early Islamic texts has been attempted by very few orientalist scholars.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Based on the secondary literature dealing with Arkoun's critique of Orientalism, I will refer to Arkoun's critique of Orientalism not as Orientalist discourse, but as Orientalist method. As far as I understand, Arkoun specifically criticizes the Orientalist historians' method of studying the Islamic Tradition.

¹⁹⁰ Arkoun 1985 a: 92.

¹⁹¹ Kersten 2010: 3.

¹⁹² Arkoun, "Islamic Studies": in The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World: 2009.

Unlike some Orientalists, Arkoun advocates the study of Islamic Tradition through a transdisciplinary approach that incorporates social sciences, philology, history, anthropology, linguistics, and philosophy. For the study of Islam, Arkoun calls for the creation of a network of critical thinking. He notes, for example, that some Orientalists overlook the positive contributions of the humanities and social sciences to Islamic studies. As a result, they refuse to engage in epistemological discourse in the field of Islamic studies.¹⁹³ Arkoun affirms that Orientalist method only questions texts that are assumed *a priori* to belong to a religious tradition, thought, or culture.¹⁹⁴ In addition, Arkoun notes that in most Muslim societies, Islam is studied only to a limited extent and is carefully controlled by the authorities to protect political objectives and maintain the legitimacy and continuity of their power. Islam is, thus, an ideological lever, a subject of an ideological lever, a subject of offensive or defensive apology.¹⁹⁵ In this sense, one can say that Arkoun directs his criticism both at the method of studying Islam as developed by some Orientalists and at Muslim scholars who subjected and controlled their study of Islam for political ends.

In contrast to the working method of Orientalist and Muslim scholars, Arkoun argues that Islam must be liberated from the essentialist and substantialist postulates of classical metaphysics.¹⁹⁶ In other words, Islam is presented in most Orientalist history accounts as a specific, unchanging system of traditions, beliefs, and non-beliefs. I also interpret the essentialist and substantialist postulates that characterize the study of Islam by some Orientalists in terms of non-evaluative and fixed approaches to thought, following Arkoun's description of the approaches that some Orientalists use to study Islam, which he describes as "decidedly fixed, articulated, and evaluated with selections, eliminations, fragmentations, marginalization, and minimizations by those who write, read, and teach orthodox norms on the official state level of social construction."¹⁹⁷

One can argue that Arkoun's engagement with the Western discipline of Islamic studies was a critique of the positivist historians of the 1960s. Arkoun's critique of Orientalism preceded Edward Said's critique in *Orientalism* (published in 1978).¹⁹⁸ While Said criticizes Orientalism, he refers to the simplistic, stereotypical, and pejorative notions that Western scholars have of Arab and Asian cultures. Said's critique of Orientalism places us in the context of the discriminatory division that exists in the global cultural system between those who describe and decide and those who obey and observe. According to Said, Orientalist research is based on power

193 Arkoun 1985 b: 95–96.

194 Arkoun 1989: 2.

195 Arkoun 1989: 2.

196 Arkoun 1989: 2.

197 Arkoun, "Islamic Studies": in The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World: 2009.

198 Abu- Uksa 2011: 187 fn. 63.

differentials in the process of knowledge production. Arkoun paved the way for the critique of Orientalism in 1973. "His critique of Orientalism was methodological in nature."¹⁹⁹ He denounced that some Orientalist historian does not consider the new methodological principles recently elaborated by social scientists and historians to allow an evaluative and more critical understanding of Islam.

Arkoun mostly adopts a critical attitude toward the Orientalist method and seeks to liberate the field of Islamic studies from that which he argues does not promote a more critical examination of the sources of Islam and does not relate them to human societies. For Arkoun, Orientalism is presented only to examine what Tradition has said, without seeing if that Tradition is still applicable in today's Muslim context.

In addition, an important part of Arkoun's critique of "Orientalist European Islamology"²⁰⁰ – that is, what I have previously called a critique of the Orientalist method – may be his desire to create a dialogue between European and Arabo-Muslim intellectuals on the subject of Islamic studies in order to reduce the pejorative study of Islam by some Orientalist thinkers. Thus, Arkoun aims to promote dialogue between Muslim intellectuals and their Western counterparts on the challenges facing Islam today. Throughout his intellectual career, Arkoun has studied both Islamic and Western schools of thought. In Arkoun's view, intellectuals have a key role to play in expressing the concerns of their societies. Their role should be to provide understandable and accessible information about political and social issues affecting their societies and to link these to a global intellectual critique.²⁰¹

To simply put, Orientalist method does not address the social, political, and cultural concerns and problems associated with contemporary Muslim societies. Therefore, the question arises: what is the alternative discourse that Arkoun offers to Islamic studies that embodies the characteristics of an applied Islamology?

The discourse of the science of man and society: Disclosing the "Unthought" of Islam as a subversive strategy

Arkoun introduces the discourse of the science of man and society as an alternative to the Orientalist method of studying Islam and as a more evaluative and critical discourse to the Islamic Tradition. It is in fact the fourth discourse, following the other three enumerated above:

The discourse of the sciences of man and society, which aims to rework the preceding three to emphasise in each instance those questions that are repressed as

¹⁹⁹ Abu- Uksa 2011: 187 fn. 63.

²⁰⁰ Rhouni 2010: 20.

²⁰¹ Völker 2015: 214.

unthinkable or "unthought", and, thus, to make possible a *current* critical revival of the problem of the Tradition and traditions in Islam.²⁰²

In other words, the discourse of the science of man and society aims at critically questioning the previous discourses on Islam. It seeks to place Islam within the framework of the critical disciplines in order to interrogate the unthinkable, the unthought; that is, the hidden and concealed features associated with Islamic thought. Next I examine the main features of the thinkable and the unthinkable, i.e., the thought and the unthought, in order to clarify Arkoun's intention in his proposing the discourse of the science of man and society that examines Islamic thought within critical approaches. Arkoun first defines the sphere of the unthinkable, which has anchored Islamic thought in a tradition of thought that renders reason incapable of critically engaging in rethinking Islam. In this context, he claims:

When the field of the unthinkable is expanded and maintained for centuries in a particular tradition of thought, the intellectual horizons of reason are diminished, and its critical functions narrowed and weakened because the sphere of the unthought becomes more determinate and there is little space left for the thinkable.²⁰³

As Arkoun affirms, the unthinkable exists in religious, political, and legal realms that cannot be critically thought. He writes:

Islam everywhere has been put under the control of the state (*étatisé*); but the religious discourse developed by the opposing social forces shifted to a **populist** ideology which increased the extent of the **unthought**, especially in the religious, political, and legal fields. [emphasis in the original]²⁰⁴

Arkoun believes that the state, through its institutions, engages in the manipulation of the unthinkable sphere and the distortion of the critical thinking framework. He declares:

There certainly is a clash, but it is between collective **imaginaries** constructed and maintained on both sides through **unthinkables** and **unthoughts** cultivated by the education systems, the discourse of political and academic establishments, and the media that feed on this rhetoric and seek to increase their following

202 Arkoun 1985 a: 92.

203 Arkoun 2002 a: 12.

204 Arkoun 2002 a: 15.

by outdoing each other with anticipations of interpretations from the leading minds. [emphasis in the original]²⁰⁵

Thus, Arkoun asserts that the unthinkable is subject to the control of the state, which contributes to the formation of collective ideas about religion that influence law and politics. In other words, the unthought refers to religious restrictions and prohibitions that the thought cannot critically question. In this regard, Margot Badran, a Muslim feminist thinker, argues that Arkoun's concept of the unthought corresponds to the religious segment of the public sphere; that is, the realm of religious professions and performance of rites, and the private family sphere, which is legally regulated by religion.²⁰⁶ In both spheres, public and private, women are not allowed to participate and be active according to the patriarchal interpretation of Islamic legacy. Likewise, the thought is forbidden to question the unthought aspect of religious rituals and traditions promoted by religious orthodoxy. According to Ursula Günther, the concepts of thought and the unthought aim to open Islamic studies and thought to critique by questioning certainties and pushing thought beyond the boundaries of orthodoxy.²⁰⁷

One can assume that Arkoun, through the discourse of the science of man and society, seeks to examine Islam in relation to the real change that most Muslim societies face and to question the silent and forbidden aspect of the Islamic Tradition. In doing so, Islamic studies should consider that Islam as a religion must be critically assessed and evaluated. I agree with Ursula Günther who says that "Arkoun ... goes beyond the boundaries of Islamic Studies by appropriating methods that traditionally are not part of what is considered to be Islamic Studies or the study of Islam."²⁰⁸ This leads me to present how applied Islamology, through its transference to the discourse of man and society, can challenge some unreflective systems regarding the issue of women in Islam.

The relevance of applied Islamology for feminist thought: An exemplary case for its emancipatory functions

An intrinsic emancipation norm that applied Islamology seeks to improve is Islam's equality policy. Applied Islamology examines the forbidden and hidden aspects of human societies that are not considered in the critical framework. Injustice and discrimination against women in the legal and political spheres are among the unthinkable issues that applied Islamology seeks to address. As Arkoun points out:

²⁰⁵ Arkoun 2002 a: 18.

²⁰⁶ Badran 2010: 28.

²⁰⁷ Günther 2004 a: 125.

²⁰⁸ Günther 2004 a: 125.

Women represent a particularity disadvantaged social body; it is they who have to suffer the oppression of regimes that instrumentalize religion to compensate for their own lack of political legitimacy; the resistance of the popular mentality to any questioning of the status of women as fixed by God Himself in the Qur'ān; and the weight of beliefs and customs they have themselves internalized through the rearing process handed down by their mothers and grandmothers in the lineage of an ancient feminine memory.²⁰⁹

The laws governing the legal conduct of women are both prescribed in the scriptures of Islam and the subject of traditional customs that influence the prescription of women's rights in Islam. Here, the method of applied Islamology critically examines the traditional constructs that continue to restrict women's right. Arkoun exemplifies the potential of applied Islamology to critically investigate gender issues in the following way:

Applied Islamology first proceeds with the sociological analysis of the evolution of the structures and functions of parenthood in Islamic contexts. There too, one discovers the simultaneous disintegration of the traditional structures and codes, and the imposition by the state of traditionalist policies that protect the official religion and divine Law from 'blasphemy.' This means that family law remains unalterable; women can vote, but still they do not enjoy the same rights as men.²¹⁰

In other words, women in Islam live in a dichotomy between the religious tradition of Islam and global modern rules. The example Arkoun gives of women having the right to vote but not enjoying other important rights and freedoms is an apt example that illustrates this dichotomy. The right to vote has to do with the modern rules of citizenship that many Muslim countries are forced to accept as part of the world, but family law, which determines a woman's social and political status in relation to her society, continues to be manipulated by patriarchy. The feminist project of Fatima Mernissi (d. 2015), presented in the first part of this research, consisted of her study of the feminist task within modern secular rules and Islamic traditions, showing that one cannot apply secular and modern rules to the Muslim world without modernizing Islamic discourse itself. For this reason, Mernissi's idea was to reconcile the secular and 'Islamic' feminist movements. In Arkoun's words, reconciliation between secular and Islamic feminism means reform. It means reforming Islamic thought to reconcile with modernity, but with some preservation and critique of Western modernity itself. This will be presented in chapter three. The critique of

²⁰⁹ Arkoun 2002 a: 22.

²¹⁰ Arkoun 2007: 23–24.

Western modernity marks an important difference between the methodological and normative strategies of both thinkers.

In this regard, Muslim feminists recognize that there is a political reform (*islah*) beyond Arkoun's approach of applied Islamology. This is the defense of gender justice in Islam. Indeed, Malika Zeghal begins her article "Veiling and Unveiling Muslim Women: State Coercion, Islam, and the Disciplines of the Heart" (2012) by addressing the question of feminism in Tunisia between secular and Islamic thought. Zeghal shows that Arkoun's intellectual endeavor to reform religious discourse and transform political discourse on gender provides a promising gender discourse on the eve of postcolonial Tunisia. She contends that there is a contradictory discourse about women in postcolonial Tunisia; that is, a deep, hidden, and unstable convergence in the terminologies used in the debate about women between the secular nationalist elites and "those who 'expressed in Islamic terms' a 'hankering for cultural authenticity'".²¹¹ Put simply, secular nationalist elites use the same vocabulary of cultural authenticity that includes Islamic terms. Likewise, Islamist activists refer to the national expression by calling Tunisian women virtuous citizens. Arkoun's intellectual project offers a way to make intelligible this contradictory discourse between the nationalist secular discourse and the nationalist Islamist discourse in the postcolonial period of most Muslim societies by showing that both the secular and Islamist discourses share an orthodox and hegemonic conception. They both serve to create fundamentalist, authoritarian, and discriminatory discourses about religion, culture, gender, and identity. This will be discussed in more detail in the third chapter of this study.

In her critical stance on the theory of Islamic feminism, Raja Rhouni also describes Arkoun as a "post-foundationalist Islamic gender critic."²¹² It would be equally accurate for her to describe Muslim feminist scholars who critique patriarchally controlled interpretations of Islam as post-foundationalist scholars who subscribe to Arkoun's "global epistemological project of applied Islamology."²¹³ Rhouni sees that the method of "Islamic feminism" calls for women's rights in Islam within the "androcentric assumptions of Islamic jurisprudence."²¹⁴

There are several approaches associated with the field of feminism in Islam, such as state feminism, secular feminism, and Islamic feminism. In Zeghal's work, we saw how state feminism uses the same term that secular or Islamic feminist movements use to demand women's rights. Influenced by Arkoun's foundational critique of traditional Islamic thought, Rhouni uses a lower-case "i" to distinguish between rationalist scholars and traditionalist scholars in Islamic feminism (see part one of

²¹¹ Zeghal 2012: 129.

²¹² Rhouni 2008: 103; Rhouni 2010: 17.

²¹³ Rhouni 2010: 20.

²¹⁴ Rhouni 2010: 20.

this study, on Fatima Mernissi). Indeed, she claims that one should be careful with the approach of Islamic feminism because sometimes Islamic feminist scholars use their method of “picking-and-choosing”²¹⁵ to pick up or drop an idea that correctly represents women in Islam, but they do not offer a deconstructionist approach to the study of Qur’anic verses or Tradition that would also explain the predominant position of women in Islam.

In this sense, Rhouni sees that Arkoun’s post-foundationalist critique of religious discourse and Mernissi’s critical study of patriarchal religious interpretation of Islamic texts share commonalities.²¹⁶ Arkoun and Mernissi aim to open Islamic discourse to a new rational interpretation.

Thus, one can see how Arkoun’s method of applied Islamology is important for contemporary gender scholars to classify and distinguish Muslim thinkers according to their thought processes when it comes to demanding gender justice in Islam. To reiterate, applied Islamology is an important method of analysis for Islamic studies. It is distinguished by its transdisciplinary and deconstructionist approaches to the study of Islam. It is directed against the simplistic, aestheticizing Orientalist method. Its main concern is to provide a rational and scientific discourse on man and society that penetrates into the realm of the unthinkable/unthought of Islamic thought. The emancipatory norms inherent in applied Islamology can be exemplified by Arkoun’s efforts to emancipate women from patriarchal and fundamentalist constructs.

Exhaustive Tradition: The emergence of a subdivided Tradition in the Islamic archive using the methods of poststructuralist thought

In this section, Arkoun’s method of exhaustive tradition is presented as an additional methodological tool within his transdisciplinary method of applied Islamology. The exhaustive tradition involves Arkoun introducing the methods of post-structuralist Western philosophy to examine Islamic religious discourse. When one engages with Arkoun’s intellectual project, one can understand that the method of applied Islamology aims to establish an exhaustive tradition in Islam. Arkoun uses the term exhaustive tradition to refer to the marginalized cultural traditions of various religious sects that are excluded from the study of Islam. In this sense, the exhaustive tradition subjects the Islamic corpus to multiple and polythetic interpretations. The exhaustive tradition releases Islamic thought from logosphere. By logosphere, Arkoun refers to a restrained and structured interpretation of the Islamic corpora – Qur'an and Tradition – based on a unified interpretation of their language and the context of their emergence. Thus, this section presents the three poststructuralist

²¹⁵ Rhouni 2010: 20.

²¹⁶ Rhouni 2010: 35.

analytical methods, *epistème*, difference, and deconstruction, that Arkoun uses to interpret the Islamic corpora, which he refers to as the Islamic archive. By the Islamic archive, Arkoun means the two teachings of the Islamic religion, the Qur'an and Tradition, which have degenerated into a simplistic interpretation and do not submit to the framework of critical and evaluative thinking.

Three analysis methods to deconstruct and rethink the Islamic archive: *Epistème*, Difference, and Deconstruction

In "The Answers of Applied Islamology" (2007), Arkoun refers to Western poststructuralist thinkers who have subjected classical and metaphysical Western thought to a critical framework. Through their critical work, they provide new methods and concepts that allow us to reevaluate our notions about values, religion, and law to cite only a few. Arkoun introduces these thinkers to demonstrate the plausibility of using their methods of critical analysis to open the Islamic archive to diverse interpretations. He declares:

Jacques Derrida warns us that, as a singular item, the archive (*arkheion* – that which is ancient) is a query about the future itself, made by a rational mind in the tradition of Freud and Nietzsche – and later pursued with varying degrees of pertinence by Arendt, Deleuze, Foucault, Levinas, Ricoeur, Lacan, Legendre, etc. Those names may let one think that this archive is a matter solely for those philosophers and psychoanalysts who have replaced classical metaphysical wishful thinking with a genealogical critique of their subject matter, of 'values,' of the Law (as the art of legal interpretation) and of the references to foundational texts as a revealed given.²¹⁷

Among these scholars, Arkoun refers in particular to the critical analysis approaches of Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze to demonstrate his strategy of subjecting the Islamic archive to rational and critical analysis.

Foucault's notion of the *epistème* and the disclosure of the logosphere

I begin by examining the concept of *epistème*, which Arkoun introduces to free the Islamic archive from its outdated, rigid interpretation and place it within the actual social implications of most Muslim societies. Arkoun writes:

As Foucault points out, the social and political sciences and the human sciences are so subservient to the pressing managerial requirements of our bureaucratic, industrial and urbanized societies that they pay little attention to 'the possibility

²¹⁷ Arkoun 2007: 21.

of a discourse which could go back and forth (between clinic and critique) without becoming discontinuous, a dual articulation of the history of individuals on the subconscious of cultures, and the historicity of the latter on individual subconsciousness.²¹⁸

Epistème means the social analysis; it examines the Islamic corpora of the Qur'an and Tradition to situate them in their social content and to see if what they claim is still applicable in today's Muslim societies or not. Epistème aims to discover and reveal the implicit structure of the discourse. Foucault's epistème method asks for the meaning of a discourse by uncovering the process of its development and evaluation. In this regard, Arkoun argues: "Epistème is a better criterion for the study of thought because it concerns the structure of the discourse – the implicit postulates which command the syntactic construction of the discourse."²¹⁹

For Foucault, epistème is not about a question of knowledge described in its progress toward an objectivity in which our contemporary science might recognize itself, but epistémè means to investigate the realms of knowledge considered outside any criterion related to their rational value or to their objective forms.²²⁰ In other words, epistème describes a system of meanings and cognitive schemes of values/categories that form the basis for knowledge, science, and philosophy at a given time. This refers to all ideas, religious doctrines, and postulates that have an impact on a system of thought and channel discourse – the way people talked about reality in a particular era.²²¹

One can affirm that Arkoun applies the method of epistème to release the Islamic archive from the logosphere system of language. As briefly mentioned earlier, the logosphere is based on a limited, narrow, and mystifying understanding of language that constructs the Islamic archive and renders it incapable of being subjected to a renewing interpretation. This means that the language of the Qur'an, if considered only as written sacred sources, does not allow for any other interpretation. Logosphere is the confinement of thought to the norms of social, political, and cultural constructions as described in the archive. In this regard, Arkoun sees that logosphere refers to the inability of reason to express itself either internally, externally or in writing without the assistance of language. The limits of language do not necessarily coincide with the limits of thought. As a free activity, thought is continuously capable of expanding the scope of language and increasing its effectiveness.²²² To put it simply, for Arkoun, the logosphere manipulates thought ac-

²¹⁸ Arkoun 2007: 21.

²¹⁹ Arkoun 2003: 20.

²²⁰ Foucault 1966: 13.

²²¹ Günther 2004 b: 267; Schönberger 2010: 6.

²²² Arkoun 2002 a: 173.

cording to language. Language formulates and constructs and limits interpretation in a strict sense. One can understand that by text, Arkoun means the religious texts that should be studied according to the transdisciplinary approach of the history of ideas, which examines a religious text by combining the fields of sociology, science, philosophy, literature, and so on.

Thus, Arkoun realizes that the text must be understood by placing it in its contemporary context. According to Arkoun, the relationship between writing/text/reading must be revived in all its complexity in order to make use of documents dealing with the history of ideas. A text, once written, eludes its author and takes on a life of its own, whose richness or poverty, expansion or desiccation, oblivion or revival, is now decided by readers.²²³ In other words, by placing the archive – the text – within the framework of the history of ideas, the archive submits to the reader's understanding and relinquishes authority and control over the language used by the author. The text is interpreted differently from reader to reader, and thought becomes active in giving the text different meanings, interpretations, and explanations. In this vein, Arkoun argues:

Only rarely does the reader comprehend a text in all the meanings intended by the author. Very often it is something he recites to free himself from his own internal discourse. In this case the text is being exploited as an excuse, rather than used properly as a channel of information. It becomes the setting for an intense dialectic between reader and author. ... All these movements, exchanges and interactions help determine the life of the *logos*, in other words the mind embodying itself in a language and giving birth to many languages. Each language, in turn, can remain at the stage of the spoken word or extend itself into writing.²²⁴

Carool Kersten notes that Arkoun coined the term logosphere in reference to Derrida's notion of logocentrism.²²⁵ As a result, Arkoun seeks to explain how the Islamic archive – the text – is involved in the manipulation and control of logocentric language. Arkoun assumes that the transdisciplinary approach to the history of ideas overcomes a restrained interpretive content of the Islamic archive and interrogates it in terms of contemporary social problems of Muslim societies. In this way, Arkoun attempts to overcome a restricted interpretation of Islam. In addition to the analytical method of *épistémè*, Arkoun also uses the analytical methods of difference and deconstruction to liberate the Islamic archive from its logosphere enclosure of language.

223 Arkoun 2002 a: 172.

224 Arkoun 2002 a: 172.

225 Kersten 2010: 3.

Arkoun's adaptation of Difference and Deconstruction to liberate the Islamic archive and open up possibilities for new interpretations

Arkoun refers to Deleuze's book *Difference and Repetition* (1968–1994) to explain the features of the method of difference that he applies to liberate the Islamic archive of the Qur'an and Tradition from the logosphere control of language. Arkoun conceptualizes the role of difference as a method of analyzing a written text as follows: difference "would be to put an end to the repetition of a given form of writing after making a detailed study of its limitations, describing its internal mechanism, evaluating its role and tracing its correlations."²²⁶ In this line of thought, Deleuze introduces repetition as a paradigmatic opposition to difference, he explains, "far from grounding repetition, law shows, rather, how repetition would remain impossible for pure subjects of law – particulars."²²⁷ By pure subjects of law, I understand texts that have the role of determining a law, such as the texts of the Qur'an and Tradition. For Deleuze "there are as many constants as variables among the terms designated by laws."²²⁸ Indeed, the Qur'an and the Tradition are an object of law and the basic text of legislation, and they are determined by repetition. For this reason, it is impossible to give a pure sense of legislation when the text itself is determined by repetition. Thus, as Deleuze affirms, repetition condemns pure subjects of law to change.²²⁹

Therefore one might question to what extent repetition affects the text of the law? Can repetition lead to a pluralistic interpretation or does it rather preserve the rigid meaning of the text?

In this context, Deleuze explains, repetition accords "*an empty form of difference*, an *invariable form of variation*, a law compels its subjects to illustrate it only at the cost of their own change."²³⁰ Simply put, repetition represents a meaningless understanding of the law, i.e., the text. It is important to note that repetition conveys a simple and singular official meaning of the text and prevents the text from being open to multiple interpretations. Arkoun, in fact, aims to create a difference in the Islamic legal corpora in order to liberate the Islamic written texts from their fixed meanings enforced by conformist repetition and official interpretation. The difference leads to the creation of a pluralistic understanding of the Islamic archive, i.e. text. Thus, the understanding of the text is not bound to a limited explanation, but is open to different explanations.

²²⁶ Arkoun 2002 a: 173–174.

²²⁷ Deleuze 1994: 2.

²²⁸ Deleuze 1994: 2.

²²⁹ Deleuze 1994: 2.

²³⁰ Deleuze 1994: 2.

In addition to his use of the method of difference to create differences in the interpretation of the Islamic archive, Arkoun refers to Derrida's book *De la grammatologie* (1970) to introduce his concept of deconstruction as a criterion of analysis of the Islamic archive. For Derrida, deconstruction is "an unclosed, unenclosable, not wholly formalizable ensemble of rules for reading, interpretation, and writing."²³¹ Thus, one can state that deconstruction is behind a closed interpretation of the text. Deconstruction is crucial to liberate the text from its narrowed explanation and, thus, achieve a plausible understanding of the text. Indeed, "the task of deconstruction is to liberate the text, to deliberately develop its ambiguity, to uncover its suppressed ambiguity, to reveal its self-contradiction, and to identify the flaw, which is the condition of the possibility of every text."²³² The notion of law is fundamental in Derrida's work, which he expresses with the concept of "aporia" that blocks the understanding of the meaning of the text. Deconstruction aims to free the text from that flaw, that aporia, in order to make it intelligible.²³³ Arkoun points out

Since the publication of J. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, an interesting discussion has ensued concerning the deconstruction of classical metaphysics. It was more than a new field of research in the history of ideas as still practiced, especially in the history of Islamic thought. Derrida was aiming to introduce new cognitive strategies in the interpretation of the long philosophical tradition of thought in the ontological framework of classical metaphysics which has influenced theological thinking in the three 'revealed' religions.²³⁴

For Arkoun, deconstruction is a revolutionary method within the framework of classical metaphysics. In particular, Arkoun locates Derrida's deconstruction in the field of Islamic studies. Arkoun understands deconstruction as a new strategy of interpretation that can change the theological framework. In this regard, deconstruction is a crucial method for decoding the cognitive strategy of Islamic thought and liberating it from the logosphere construction of language and, thus, from a limited understanding of the text.

As just explained, Arkoun applies the method of difference and deconstruction to liberate the Islamic archive from an essentialist and simplistic, singular and controlled official interpretation. In what follows, I explain how Arkoun applies these deconstructionist methods to the two theories of revelation, i.e., the Qur'an – as revealed discourse – and Tradition.

231 Derrida 1983: 40.

232 Binder 1988: 92.

233 Binder 1988: 92.

234 Arkoun 2002 a: 31.

Arkoun's deconstructivist rethinking of the theories of Revelation and Tradition

As part of his critical study of Islamic thought, Arkoun questions the theories of revelation and Tradition, which are the fundamental texts that elaborated the Islamic legacy. In Islamic legacy, revelation means the word of God transmitted to his chosen messenger, Prophet Muhammad. Tradition is the Prophet's customs as prescribed by his companions so that Muslims would know how to behave according to the Prophet's words and deeds. Arkoun assumes that every discourse was subject to social conditions that changed and reshaped it during the writing process. To examine Arkoun's critical thinking about revelation and Tradition, I refer to his book *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers* (1994) and to his article "Rethinking Islam Today" (2003). I begin by examining how Arkoun explores the question of the theory of revelation. In this context, he notes that "the Islamic conception of revelation is called *tanzil* (descent), a fundamental metaphor for the vertical gaze humans being are invited to cast toward God, transcendence."²³⁵

Hence, the Qur'an was at first a revealed discourse. It was articulated as discourse to the prophet Muhammed. Arkoun wants to question the process of the writing of this revealed discourse. He argues that "the putting into writing of the whole of the revealed discourse comes under the reign of third caliph, 'Uthman, between 645 and 656."²³⁶ Arkoun attaches great importance to the process of transforming the revealed discourse of the Qur'an into a written text, because for him the revealed discourse of the Qur'an takes a great deal of time to be fully written in a book: from the time of the Prophet's life until the reign of the third caliph. Arkoun presents the process of the development of the theory of revelation from a revelatory discourse proclaimed to the Prophet Muhammad to a written text in the Qur'an as follows:

A very small group of believers followed Muhammad, a charismatic leader related to the known paradigm of prophets and messengers of God in the history of salvation common to the "People of the Book." Muhammad, supported and inspired by God, had the ability to create a new relationship to the divine through two simultaneous and interacting initiatives as all charismatic leaders do with different levels of success and innovation. He announced the absolute truth in an unusual Arabic form of expression, and he engaged the group in successive, concrete experiences of social, political, and institutional change. The Revelation translated into a sublime, symbolic, and transcendental language the daily public life of the group whose identity and *imaginaire* were separated from the hostile,

²³⁵ Arkoun 1994: 31.

²³⁶ Arkoun 1994: 30.

non-converted groups (called infidels, hypocrites, enemies of God, errants, and bedouins).²³⁷

According to Arkoun, one must historicize the revelatory event and place it in the socio-cultural context of its origin, considering what people could add to this revelatory discourse from their daily lives and experiences. Arkoun believes that what has been proclaimed as the revealed truths of Islam should not be taken as guaranteed. He criticizes in particular the method by which the revelation is developed from speech to written text and then studied in narrative approaches without examining it. In this regard, he states "When we write the history of these twenty years (612–632) during which Muhammad created a new community, we mention the principal events in a narrative style. We neglect to point out the use made of these events by later generations of believers."²³⁸ Arkoun introduces two approaches to analyze the event of revelation: "The first is to index, describe, and articulate all the significant events and facts that occurred in each period; the second is to analyze the mental representations of these events, facts, and actions shaping the collective *imaginaire* which becomes the moving force of history."²³⁹ In other words, the study of the event of revelation requires that each articulated speech should be studied according to the circumstances of its revelation. Moreover, one should consider the cultural and traditional facts that play a crucial role in the development of the theory of revelation.

To put it simply, for Arkoun, revelation, i.e., the Qur'an written down in a book called *muṣḥaf*, is subject to the circumstances and facts of the time in which it came into being. The Qur'an is not the absolute truth that it is assumed to be. Arkoun does not consider the revelation as a sacred truth transmitted by God to the Prophet Muhammad. Arkoun questions the transformation of the Qur'an from a discourse of revelation into a written text. In this line of thought, Völker comments on Arkoun's understanding of the theory of revelation as follows. Völker conceives that Arkoun's emphasizing the history of the Qur'an as that of human manipulations allows doubt about how much revelation, or original divine word, the Qur'anic text really contains. For her, Arkoun seems to deny any participation of the Divine in these manipulations, as it is sometimes put forward by Islamic teachings. In her view, Arkoun excludes what he considers mythological elements like the idea of Jibril and Muhammad editing the text together, or that God gave Muhammad's followers superhuman memories.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Arkoun 2003: 34–35.

²³⁸ Arkoun 2003: 34–35.

²³⁹ Arkoun 2003: 34–35.

²⁴⁰ Völker 2014.

In other words, Arkoun holds that the Qur'an is a human creation subject to human manipulation and has nothing to do with supernatural or divine forces writing it. This was Arkoun's understanding of Mu'tazila's theological quest to gain recognition for "Khalq al-Qur'an" (God's created speech). Simply put, his position that the Qur'an is a human creation is inspired by the Mu'tazila theory, which makes this exact claim. Mu'tazila aimed to establish a similar thought that would legitimize the rationalist interpretation of the Qur'an, in contrast to their opponent, who contended that the Qur'an was not created but was the literal word of God. In the same spirit of the Mu'tazila, Arkoun distinguished between "the Qur'anic event" and "the Islamic event or phenomenon" (I examine the Qur'anic event/fact distinction in chapter 3) in order to separate the period of revelation from the historical consequences that were manifested in the establishment of state, dogma, institutions, and legal and ethical systems during and after the seventh century.²⁴¹

Regarding Tradition, Arkoun asserts that in addition to the Qur'an, which is the main foundation of the Shari'a – Islamic law – there is a second source or foundation (*asl*): the prophetic Tradition known through the Hadith, the utterances of the Prophet in his role as leader of the community of believers.²⁴² Arkoun affirms that the prophetic Tradition is a second basis for the elaboration of the Islamic legacy, which he believes is limited to a collection of "authentic" texts recognized in each community: Shi'i, Sunni, and Khariji.²⁴³ In this sense, Arkoun "sought to replace the monolithic fundamentalist perception of Islam (in Sunni, Shi'i and Khariji Islam) with a discursive and pluralistic notion, free from the manipulation of power."²⁴⁴ This becomes even clearer when he introduces his concept of exhaustive tradition, which means to create a pluralistic, discursive, and subdivided concept of Islam by opening it up to what is considered to be the marginalized and non-fundamental tradition of Islam.

Arkoun draws our attention to the fact that the writing of the Tradition took much more time than the compilation of the Qur'anic text. Importantly, the selection and editing of the Tradition gave rise to ongoing controversies among the three Muslim communities: Shi'a, Sunni, and Khariji.²⁴⁵ Arkoun emphasizes the complexity of transforming a discourse, like revelation, into a written text. The Tradition took a long time after the Prophet's death to become a text. It is important to question the authenticity of the Tradition, how it was transmitted, under what circumstances it was transmitted, by whom, and whether the source is infallible. One should keep in mind that the Tradition of the Prophet is understood and interpreted differently by

²⁴¹ Abu- Uksa 2011: 174.

²⁴² Arkoun 1994: 45.

²⁴³ Arkoun 2003: 21 .

²⁴⁴ Abu- Uksa 2011: 176.

²⁴⁵ Arkoun 1994: 45.

different Islamic schools. There are some sources of transmission that are neglected by some, and considered infallible by other Islamic schools.

Arkoun notes that revelation and Tradition continue to reconstruct our understanding of Islam without subjecting them to critical analysis to examine the origins of their development. Thus, as part of his deconstruction of Islamic thought, Arkoun seeks to subject the theory of revelation and Tradition to the framework of critical analysis. Thus, one can say that Arkoun uses the analytical criterion of deconstruction to examine the sources of Islam that construct a form of dogmatic belief. In fact, Arkoun seeks to re-emphasize the marginalized meaning, the hidden or forgotten meaning that has contaminated the discourse of the revelation and Tradition.²⁴⁶ In this context, Soekarba claims that Derrida offers critical processes to analyze written discourse.

As outlined earlier, this critical process, referred to as 'deconstruction,' is a tool to uncover different meanings in Islamic archive. "Derrida writes of liberation, but specifically of liberation of the text in the sense of its openness to possible meaning."²⁴⁷ Indeed, Arkoun has paid particular attention to the method of deconstruction in an attempt to reinvent meanings that have been marginalized or forgotten through the closure and freezing of Islamic thought.²⁴⁸ In my own words, deconstruction serves to shake up, expose, and transform the mutual repetition that constitutes thought, written text, or spoken discourse. I further argue that Arkoun employs a schematic and organized set of analytical criteria to examine Islamic thought, beginning with a deconstructionist examination of its implicit foundations, moving through the discovery of its various traditions, and ending with the deconstruction of the conventional belief system.

As a result, the analytical criteria of *épistème*, difference, and deconstruction open the Islamic archive to further interpretation. Thus, a subdivision of traditions into Islamic traditions is developed. I agree with Khalil and Khan who explain that Arkoun believes that deconstruction of discourse should be followed by reconstruction after it has been freed from constraints, freezes, and distortions.²⁴⁹ Thus, Arkoun has a goal that goes beyond his deconstruction of the Islamic archive. He believes that deconstruction must be followed by ethical reconstruction. I argue that Arkoun's use of deconstruction is based on an implicit emancipation norm, as it aims to liberate the Islamic archive from logosphere manipulation. Therefore, "the term 'deconstruction,' according to one of its champions, Jacques Derrida, is more than merely a method for interpreting texts; it is a mode of political action as well, though it is not 'political action' as that term is ordinarily understood. ... The deconstruction

246 Khalil and Khan 2013: 35.

247 Binder 1988: 91.

248 Soekarba 2014: 80–81.

249 Khalil and Khan 2013: 35.

of texts is essentially and emphatically a political act. ... Deconstruction has political consequences – ... it is a new way of constituting ‘the world.’”²⁵⁰

In this respect, deconstruction opposes the dominant religious and political interpretation of Islam. It emancipates the Islamic archive from its logosphere enclosure and gives marginalized minorities of Islam the right to emerge, speak, and contribute to a modern *ijtihād* (intellectual struggle) on Islamic legacy. “Arkoun’s deconstruction [of the Islamic archive of the Qur’an and Tradition and his proposals for reformulating the Shari‘a] placed him in a frontal clash with conservatives and with political-Islamic movements.”²⁵¹

Exhaustive tradition: On the ethical necessity of speaking about the marginalized cultural traditions of Islam

According to Arkoun, the Islamic archive neglects the various cultural traditions that are part of Islam. Based on his concept of exhaustive tradition, Arkoun attempts to critique the dominant tradition of Islam by including other cultural traditions to bring the marginalized cultures more into focus. In this context, Arkoun affirms:

Islam holds historical significance for all of us, but at the same time, our understanding of this phenomenon is sadly inadequate. There is a need to encourage and initiate audacious, free, productive thinking on Islam today.²⁵²

To accomplish this, Arkoun proposes to critically examine “silent Islam” to explore all the cultures and systems of thought associated with pre-Islamic, pagan, polytheistic societies as well as modern secular societies that remain unthinkable and are therefore unthinkable in orthodox Islam.²⁵³ Simply put, Arkoun tries to open the sphere of the unthinkable, outlined earlier, to criticism. This will make it possible to identify the silent cultures and traditions that have influenced Islam’s development, rather than reducing Islam to one tradition.

Arkoun argues “if we add to the Qur’an and Hadith, the methodology used to derive the Shari‘a and the *Corpus juris* in the various schools, we have other subdivisions of the three axes of Islamic Tradition.”²⁵⁴ One could understand that Arkoun wants to apply the exhaustive tradition approach to the four predominant Islamic schools of law of the Maaliki, Shaafā'i, Hanafi, and Hanbali in order to derive a pluralistic and heterogeneous interpretation of the Islamic law of the Shari‘a as the main law of Islamic legislation.

²⁵⁰ Zuckert 1991: 336.

²⁵¹ Abu- Uksa 2011: 176.

²⁵² Arkoun 2003: 18–19.

²⁵³ Arkoun 2003: 20.

²⁵⁴ Arkoun 2003: 21.

Thus, the application of the exhaustive tradition will produce a variety of interpretations of the Islamic textual sources that are consistent with each Islamic school. Hence Arkoun declares "I tried to introduce the concept of an exhaustive tradition worked by a critical, modern confrontation of all the collections used by the communities, regardless of the orthodox limits traced by the classical authorities."²⁵⁵ In fact, the exhaustive tradition is at odds with the orthodox and classical methods of studying Islam. The exhaustive tradition is characterized by its critical approach.

One might note that the concept of 'exhaustive' is associated with the concept of tradition. Here one should explain the difference between the Tradition of the Prophet and tradition as cultural traditions related to Islam. Arkoun explains the latter as follows: "the concept of tradition as it used in anthropology today – the sum of customs, laws, institutions, beliefs, rituals, and cultural values which constitute the identity of each ethno-linguistic group."²⁵⁶ In this context, Arkoun emphasizes that one should not confuse Tradition in the sense of prophetic Tradition – the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, as explained earlier – with tradition in the sense of the entire Islamic heritage (*turāth*).²⁵⁷

Hence, Arkoun understands Islam as a set of cultural traditions. The understanding of Islam should not only correspond to the different schools of Islam such as Shi'a, Sunna and Khariji, but also depend on the original and instinctive tradition of the people before the advent of Islam. That is, in terms of each folk tradition that emerges, grows and lives in contemporary Islamic societies. In Arkoun's view, the study of Islam from its various traditions requires a critical framework that asks the questions:

How do we speak of or interpret the so-called popular culture? Who uses the words magic, superstitions, paganism, polytheism, heterodoxies, or sects to refer to wrong beliefs, underdeveloped cultures, anarchy, rebellion as opposed to political order, the writing of book culture, reason, high culture, civilization, and so forth? ²⁵⁸

Using a transcultural research method, Arkoun's theory of exhaustive tradition addresses the excluded cultural traditions of people in the Islamic realm, in contrast to the conventional theological understanding of Islam developed by historian Orientalists and even contemporary Arabo-Islamic scholarship. Günther affirms that exhaustive tradition is an approach that views Islam as a holistic and comprehensive religion, marginalizing and suppressing parts that are labeled heterodox. The

²⁵⁵ Arkoun 2003: 21.

²⁵⁶ Arkoun 1998b: 209.

²⁵⁷ Arkoun 1994: 47–48.

²⁵⁸ Arkoun, "Islamic Studies": in The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World: 2009.

exhaustive tradition is another example of Arkoun's ability to create space beyond orthodox definitions. The exhaustive tradition accounts for internal discontinuities within Islamic thought, such as cosmopolitanism and plurality of doctrines. The exhaustive tradition recognizes external discontinuities in the simultaneous connection with Europe and/or the Western world and intellectual modernity.²⁵⁹ In other words, Arkoun's exhaustive tradition serves as a critique of orthodox thought that seeks to manipulate Islam. An exhaustive tradition advocates heterodoxy in Islam by supporting its pluralistic traditions. Thus, the exhaustive tradition is at odds with a monolithic reconstruction of Islam. It offers a transcultural study of Islam beyond the hierarchical manipulation of the most powerful Islamic tradition of the Arab Muslim Sunna and the Persian Muslim Shi'i. Exhaustive tradition means claiming the right of Muslim minorities to stand up for their rights. Exhaustive tradition as an intellectual, ethical and political project ensures the multiculturalism of Islam in terms of cultural diversity, without excluding different Islamic schools or Islamic religious sects and traditions.

Arkoun's approach to an exhaustive tradition is rooted in and resonates with his biography as a Kabyle-Berber Algerian Muslim intellectual belonging to a marginalized ethnic group in the Maghreb. Thus, exhaustive tradition makes marginalized popular traditions in Arab Muslim countries emerge in the face of dominant social, political, and cultural repressions. The Berber community in Algeria recognized marginalization after and before independence. In most Maghrebian countries, Berber are still struggling to secure their economic, social, and political rights.²⁶⁰ Indeed, Berber militants fought the government in the early 2000s, demanding their economic, political, and cultural rights. This conflict is not new, but it has found firm and persistent expression since 2001. This has included occasional clashes with security forces, in which more than eighty Berber demonstrators have died and several people have been arrested.²⁶¹

The militant repression and resistance of the Berber ethnic group in the Maghreb during these years challenged the realization of one of their cultural rights. In 2016, the Tamazight language – the Berber language, which is the second largest spoken language after Moroccan and Algerian dialects – was declared an official language in Algeria and Morocco.

Yet Arkoun was not a political activist, nor was he directly involved in politics. When Arkoun was asked in an interview, "Why is the political aspect absent from

259 Günther 2004 a: 155, fn. 14.

260 In this context See: Chaker Salem (1992): "La question Berbère dans l'Algérie indépendante: La fracture inévitable ?". In *L'Algérie incertaine* (No 65, pp. 97–105). Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée.

261 Layachi 2005: 196.

your works?" he answered, "No, the political exists on every single page, and in every single concept I use, it is evident in the scientific content."²⁶² One can understand that Arkoun's critical analysis of Islamic thought has a political and ethical basis that leads to liberating most Muslim people from the injustice and alienation they experience because of their different ethnicities, as stated above. Arkoun's writings on the exhaustive tradition can reflect the struggles that marginalized Muslim ethnic groups face on the ground to defend their rights. The emancipation of the Berber population was, thus, accompanied by the intellectual engagement of several Berber intellectuals, such as Arkoun, whose critical concepts implicitly championed the Berber cause in the Maghreb.

To summarize what this chapter explored: Arkoun offers transdisciplinary, transcultural, and rational approaches of thinking about the study of Islam, taken from Al-Amiri's Islamic philosophy. Arkoun's methods of thinking further combine concepts from poststructuralist Western philosophies. This chapter presented Arkoun's method of applied Islamology, which is a critical, modern analysis of Orientalist/classical Islamic studies and aims to develop a new discourse for the study of Islam. His concept of exhaustive tradition, which is a post-structuralist approach, also serves to deconstruct/reconstruct Islamic legacy. Applied Islamology and exhaustive tradition contribute to creating an implicit ethical norm through the emancipation of most Muslim women from patriarchal rules, the liberation of Islamic thought from logosphere, and finally the emancipation of the popular tradition from the hegemonic religious and political systems. The following chapter examines Arkoun's critique of the various levels of hegemonic discourse manifested in the spheres of religion and politics and expressed in postcolonial discourse and Western Eurocentrism.

262 Arkoun's interview by Turki al-Dakhil on the Alarabiya satellite channel: "Iṣa'āt: Mohammed Arkoun;" Abu- Uksa 2011: 172).