[SECTION TWO]

RENEWAL (*TAJDĪD*), IMITATION (*TAQLĪD*)
AND ADHERENCE (*ITTIBĀ*ᶜ) IN RELATION
TO IJTIHAD

Points of Overlap
and Complementarity
Between *Tajdīd* and Ijtihad

[THEME I]
The Term Tajdīd as Defined in
Lexicons, Law, and Technical Usage

THE TRILITERAL ROOT *j-d-d* has many denotations. The verb *jadda* (verbal noun, *jiddah*), for example, means to be or become new, and is thus related semantically to the verb *ijtahada*, which involves the expenditure of effort to emerge with new meanings. The original denotation of the verb *jadda* was to cut off (verbal noun, *jadd*). The adjective *jadūd*, when applied to a she-camel, means that her milk has stopped flowing, and a new robe (*thawb jadīd*) is one that was newly cut. Related verb forms are *tajaddada* (to be renewed), *jaddada* (to renew), and *istajadda* (to emerge newly). The verbal noun *jiddah* is the opposite of the noun *bilā*, meaning decline or deterioration. Hence, a term used for the sun and the moon is *al-jadīdān* ('the two new ones'), because they never deteriorate or wear out.

Turning to the Qur'an, we find that the adjective *jadīd* occurs six times: "...After we have become dust, shall we indeed be [restored to life] in a new act of creation (*fī khalqin jadīd*)?..." (*Sūrah al-Raʿd*, 13:5); "...[God] can, if He so wills, do away with you and bring forth a new mankind (*khalq jadīd*) [in your stead]..." (*Sūrah Ibrāhīm*, 14:19); "...you shall – lo and behold! – be [restored to life] in a new act of creation (*khalq jadīd*)?" (*Sūrah Sabaʾ*, 34:7); "...Nay – but some people are [still] lost in doubt about [the possibility of] a new creation" (*Sūrah*

Qāf, 50:15); and, "They say, 'After we will have become bones and dust, shall we, forsooth, be raised from the dead in a new act of creation (*khalq jadīd*)?'" (*Sūrah al-Isrā'*, 17:49, 98). The "new creation" referred to here is one that recently came into existence; as such, it is different from the one that deteriorated with the passage of time. Hence, the original sense of 'cut off' may be discerned in the fact that the new creation is 'cut off' (separate, distinct) from the old.

In the Sunnah, by contrast, the concepts of *tajdīd* and ijtihad are used in relation to direction and guidance, though not in a regimented, exclusive sense that would cancel out all other meanings and significations. In the Sunnah we find derivatives of the root *j-d-d* used in the sense of cutting or severing, self-sufficiency, greatness, sturdiness, clarity, and newness as opposed to deterioration. In a well-known hadith, the Prophet said, "Verily, at the beginning of each new generation, God will send the Muslim community someone who will renew their religion for them (*man yujaddidu lahā dīnahā*)." The phrase "renew their religion for them" means that this individual will clarify the difference between practices that entail emulation of the Prophet's example and those that are baseless innovations, help and support those who promote and disseminate knowledge while defeating those who promote baseless innovations, revive Qur'anic and Sunnah-based practices that have been neglected, and instruct people based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Some scholars view renewal as a movement initiated by one or more individuals, while others view it as a movement initiated by an entire community. In either case, the renewer, or *mujaddid*, is likewise a *mujtahid*, since Islamic renewal can only be properly undertaken by someone who is qualified to engage in ijtihad. Some scholars view renewal/*tajdīd* as being broader and more inclusive than ijtihad, while others view ijtihad as being broader and more inclusive than renewal/*tajdīd*. It follows, then, that not every *mujaddid* is a *mujtahid*, and not every *mujtahid* is a *mujaddid*. According to al-Munāwī (d. 1031 AH/1621 CE), the relative pronoun *man* ("one who") in the phrase *man yujaddidu* ("one who will renew") refers to

either a single *mujtahid*, or a number of *mujtahid*s. This individual or

group, whose task is to establish proofs and uphold the Sunnah, will be endowed with the ability to clarify ambiguities in light of teachings that are definitive and clear. He/she/they will demonstrate the capacity to deduce facts and theories from both the explicit texts of the Qur'an and its symbols, connotations, and implications with attentive minds and hearts.

This individual or group need not have a specialization in Islamic jurisprudence. It has been noted, for example, that at the dawn of the third century AH there appeared Ibn Sarīḥ al-Shāfiʿī (d. 306 AH/918 CE), a jurist, al-Ashʿarī (d. 324 AH/936 CE), who specialized in the principles of jurisprudence, and al-Nasā'ī (d. 303 AH/915 CE), a hadith specialist. The beginning of the sixth century AH witnessed the contribution of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH/1209 CE), a scholastic theologian, and so on. As for why the hadith specifies that renewers and reformers will appear at the turn of a new century – or, one might say, the start of a new generation – al-Mannāwī explains this based on the fact that as one generation gives way to the next, this is the time when there is the greatest likelihood of confusion or disorientation among scholars and the appearance of harmful innovations and impostors.

In al-Turabi's view, religious renewal should be undertaken by an entire group of people working together, since life in our day and age has become so complex that intellectual renewal is too great a task for a single individual, however prominent and influential, to take on single-handedly. Al-Mawdudi (1903-1979) wrote in a similar vein:

In order to bring about religious renewal in a given age, it is not enough to revive the religious sciences and spark people's desire to adhere to Islamic law. Rather, what we need is a comprehensive movement whose influence extends to all scientific disciplines, arts, ideas and industries – indeed, to all aspects of human life.

After all, nothing can resist a current but a counter-current, and when corruption has infiltrated all aspects of life, the reform program will have to be so wide-ranging that it purges everything from root to branch.

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Similarly, al-Qaradawi has proposed broadening the definition of religious renewal in keeping with Prophetic hadiths which indicate that the promotion of religious renewal is not the job of a single person, but of a group that works together in the interests of truth. According to an authentic hadith in this category, the Prophet declared, "A certain group of my nation will continue to spread God's rule undeterred by their opponents until, when God's judgment descends, they will still be steadfastly carrying out this task." This hadith echoes the words of *Sūrah Āl ʿImrān*, 3:103-104, which tells us that "...God makes clear His messages unto you [believers],..." "...that there might grow out of you a community [of people] who invite unto all that is good, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong: and it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state!"

When we renew something, our aim is not to change the essential nature of the entity to be renewed or to replace it with something else but, rather, to restore it to its original state. In the case of religious renewal, it involves building on the original foundation and returning to the religion's original message and aim. When we speak of religious renewal in Islam, we are referring to a revival of the Muslim community's experience and practice of Islam. With respect to rulings and forms of worship based on the teachings of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, or the consensus of the Muslim community, renewal consists in bringing people back to the sources on which these rulings and forms of worship are based. With regard to practices that have developed or issues that have arisen in response to changing circumstances and in relation to which there is no previous ruling or explicit text, jurists need to formulate rulings that address them by thinking about them in relation to existing rulings on comparable situations. And as for situations and issues in relation to which there is no explicit text or comparable situation from the past, these must be addressed through a process of ijtihad in which the jurist in question formulates a ruling based on recognized rules and criteria.

Intellectual renewal in Islam does not abrogate existing notions or establish a new system of thought. Rather, it involves rediscovering and developing already existing ideas in keeping with the needs prevalent in our own times, and based on relevant rules, methodologies, and

recognized constants. As for its authoritative points of reference, they are: the Qur'an, the Prophetic Sunnah, tools and mechanisms for understanding Islamic principles (reason, consensus, and the like), and the Islamic intellectual and juristic heritage.

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[THEME 2]

Models of Modern Islamic Intellectual Renewal

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Al-Qaradawi has identified the key to religious renewal as "awareness and understanding." He writes:

> When I use the word fiqh, I am not using it in its technical sense of 'jurisprudence', which has to do with a knowledge of subsidiary legal rulings. Rather, I am using the word in the sense it is used in the Qur'an, and in which it was used by the Prophet. *Sūrah al-Anᶜām*, 6:98 reads, "…clearly, indeed, have We spelled out these messages unto people who can grasp the truth (*li qawmin yafqahūn*)." The same sense of the word *fiqh* is found in the saying of the Prophet, "Whomever God wishes to bless, He gives him understanding of religion" (*yufaqqihu fī al-dīn*). As used in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the word fiqh refers to understanding in two primary realms: the universe, that is, the created realm, including human beings, their environment, and the unchanging natural laws we observe in the cosmos; and in the realm of religion, that is, divinely given precepts that enable us to relate properly to reality.

As Abd al-Majid al-Najjar once put it, fiqh is

> a commitment to examining our heritage and absorbing the rich concepts it offers. However, it is a commitment to benefit from and be guided by this heritage, not to adhere slavishly to its every letter, or to adopt wholesale the understandings of those who went before us as though no other understanding were possible. Such blind imitation finds no justification in Islamic law, and would be of no help to us in reforming conditions around us.

According to al-Turabi, the desired religious renewal takes place in

three stages. In the first stage, we go back to the fundamental sources of religious instruction, namely, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, enlightened by our traditions, our heritage, and the experiences of our righteous forebears. In the second stage, we define the connection between our understanding of the aforementioned sources and the various sciences – from economics, to anthropology, to the natural sciences, so as to draw the proper connection between Islamic thought and the reality in which we live. And in the third stage, we apply Islamic teachings to concrete situations so that daily experience and religion can mingle in a vital way.

The starting point for the renewal lies in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Our understanding and applications of the Qur'an and the Sunnah are colored and guided by the experiences of the first generations of Muslims, particularly the Prophet's Companions, as well as the experiences of subsequent generations of Muslims. Scholars and thinkers may differ over how to understand and respond to specific issues; however, there is no harm in this so long as the basic premises and end goals are held in common.

In his book, *Manhaj Tajdīd al-Fikr*, Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki (born 1940) has identified certain rules that govern our approach to religious renewal. These rules include: (1) understanding of the religion, (2) understanding of reality, (3) the recognition that most of the texts being dealt with are of speculative rather than definitive meaning; (4) an awareness of God's bounty and grace; (5) the understanding that in the renewal process, fiqh must encompass not only legal matters but, in addition, the role of theoretical knowledge in the derivation of legal rulings and the discovery of natural laws; (6) the importance of drawing on other disciplines as means of reaching full understanding; and (7) recognition of the role of practical knowledge in helping us to determine how to apply religious teachings to specific situations in believers' daily lives.

It bears noting that virtually every one of the various contemporary models of religious and intellectual renewal can be broken down into three basic, overlapping conceptual areas, namely: religion, reason, and reality (i.e., concrete circumstances), or revelation, humanity, and the cosmos.

Ijtihad and Renewal

No social structure can survive merely on the basis of art, science and the intellect, since it is the spiritual dimension that enables humanity to advance and progress. Wherever the spiritual dimension is absent, civilization declines, since whoever lacks the ability to move upward will, by virtue of the force of gravity, have nowhere to go but down. In the words of Malek Bennabi (1905-1973):

> If the Qur'anic impetus wanes, the Islamic world will slow to a halt, just as an engine will die when it runs out of fuel. No temporal entity over the course of human history has ever been able to replace the one and only fount of human energy: that of faith.

The conditions for civilizational renewal and awakening, in Bennabi's terms, are: human beings, soil, and time. These three factors constitute the social capital that supplied the Muslim community with what it required in its early historical stages. However, in order for these elements to properly advance and evolve, they need to be guided by religious concepts.

Ijtihad is by definition a process that interacts with concrete circumstances and with newly arising issues and situations. As for the priorities to which attention must be given at the present time, Munir Shafiq (born 1934) lists the following issues as being of particular urgency: enabling the Muslim community to regain its autonomy and dignity by freeing itself from foreign control; the divisions that rack the Muslim community worldwide and the consequent need to achieve unity; development related issues; questions of social justice, human dignity, the practice of consultation, and the relationship between rulers and their people; environmental pollution; the debt burdens under which poor nations labor; and the family unit's disintegration and collapse.

It will, admittedly, be a major challenge to agree collectively on the overall features of an approach to ijtihad and renewal. However, it is reasonable to believe that we can reduce differences of opinion and work effectively in this direction.

[THEME 3]
Renewal and Various Approaches to Understanding and Use

Scholars differ over the distinction between the term *tajdīd* (generally translated as 'renewal'), and other related terms. The reason for the difference of opinion is that some of these terms in contemporary usage bear senses or connotations that conflict with the Muslim community's historical beliefs and practices. Rather than eliminating their use entirely, however, we need to dissociate these terms and their related concepts from undesirable nuances and connotations by highlighting their terminological, linguistic and legal origins.

The most complete renewal is one that combines both revival and development. Revival achieves a historical gain by advancing the religion after a period of decline; while development achieves an even greater historical gain, since it adapts the religion to new historical conditions.

In what follows I will present several different approaches to religious reform and renewal. The originator of the first approach, Tunisian scholar Hichem Djait (born 1935), holds that countries that are behind in the area of Islamic legislation should catch up with those that are more advanced in this area. Specifically, Djait maintains that we should put an end to the cruel, inappropriate *ḥudūd* penalties that were abandoned by the Umayyads thirteen centuries ago and place our emphasis instead on the vast field of personal status laws, whose formulations are outmoded and stand in need of modernization.

Djait divides the individuals who are concerning themselves with renewal into three groups. The first group consists of extremist proponents of renewal who advocate dispensing with virtually everything that smacks of the old order. The second group consists of extremist traditionalists, who want everything to stay exactly as it is. And the third group, moderate in tenor, rejects the rigidity of both of the aforementioned groups, and seeks wisdom wherever it happens to be found and in whatever form, be it new or old. Representatives of this last group support and advocate renewal that preserves Islamic authenticity. As such, they draw a distinction between customs, practices and ideas that can be legitimately borrowed and adapted from other

cultures and milieus, and those that cannot. In short, they seek to join old and new, provided that it is appropriate and beneficial.

Contemporary thinkers who have encountered opposition on account of their innovative writings include Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali (1917-1996), Hasan al-Turabi and others. The objections that have been raised against al-Ghazali's writings are generally of two types. The first type grows out of a skepticism based on a rationalist orientation which is itself doubtful in some respects, while the second type of objection follows a selective approach that focuses on particular words and expressions that occur in such people's writings while disregarding the major ideas and conclusions such works present. Adherents of this latter approach focus in on marginal issues and particulars that are secondary to the writer's revivalist aims. As a matter of fact, al-Ghazali's method was not a departure from that of his predecessors, whether ancient or modern. His principle foundations and sources were the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and his approach to both was clear: If the report before him met established criteria for authenticity and reliability, he saw no reason to reject it, and if a respectful disagreement arose over the matter of whether or not such criteria had been met, he was willing to consider the arguments pro and con, and he allowed for a variety of points of view.

[THEME 4]
Terms Belonging to the Same Semantic Family

Reference was made earlier to a set of terms whose meanings overlap to one extent or another with that of *tajdīd*, or renewal. Such terms have a number of semantic elements in common; they are all related, for example, to both the individual and the group, Self and Other, things and ideas, this world and the world to come. In addition, they all concern themselves with movement and renewal, building up and contributing, and making transitions from one situation to another. Some of them can even be used interchangeably.

1. *Taghyīr*

Translated generally as 'change', the verb *ghayyara* (verbal noun, *taghyīr*; intransitive, *taghayyara*) refers to the process by which someone or something shifts from one condition or state to another. When we change something, we have caused it to be other than what it was before. This term is used in more than one form in *Sūrah al-Anfāl*, 8:53, where we read that "God would never change (*lam yaku mughayyiran*) the blessings with which He has graced a people unless they change (*ḥattā yughayyirū*) their inner selves:..." The expression "unless they change (*ḥattā yughayyirū*) their inner selves" implies the possibility of both planting ideas in a person's mind and heart to begin with, and of removing ideas and replacing them with others.

The process referred to as *taghyīr*, or change, will take one of two forms. One either changes the outward appearance or form of something without changing its essence, or one changes its essence; in other words, one exchanges it for something else in a sense. In a hadith recorded by Muslim on the authority of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, the Messenger of God is reported to have said, "If any of you observes something objectionable, let him change it with his hand (by his actions). If this is not possible, let him seek to change it with his tongue (by his words); and if this too is impossible, then let him seek to change it with his heart (by his thoughts). The latter is the least that faith will prompt one to do."

Taha Jabir Alalwani (1935-2016) identified four basic rules of self-purification. The first of these is affirmation of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) and the desire to exalt God the Creator over all else. The second is faith in the fundamental unity of humankind, who share in a common origin, a common destiny, a common task (of developing and benefiting the Earth), and a common nature. The third is the unity and constancy of truth, and the acknowledgment that God alone comprehends all truth and reality, whereas human beings are assigned the task of seeking truth with all the means God has placed at their disposal. And the fourth is faith in human beings' having been placed on Earth, and within the wider cosmos, as God's stewards and vicegerents.

As for Abd al-Majid al-Najjar, he sees the process of change as

being centered around two principle axes. The first of these is a rejection of reality as it is, and the second is a commitment to replacing existent reality with an alternative reality based on a clear notion of what this alternative is to be and a presentation of the ways in which the alternative is to be brought into being.

2. *Iṣlāḥ*

The noun *ṣalāḥ*, meaning goodness, uprightness and soundness, is contrasted to *fasād*, meaning corruption, deterioration and harm. Hence, the derivative verbal form *aṣlaḥa* (verbal noun, *iṣlāḥ*), means to cause something to become good, sound or beneficial after its having been corrupt, unsound and harmful; in short, to reform or repair. Related pairs of opposites within this semantic field include that of *muṣliḥ* (reformer) vs. *mufsid* (corrupter, saboteur), which might refer to either an individual or a group. This duality is referred to in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:220, which tells us that "...God distinguishes between him who spoils things (*al-mufsid*) and him who improves (*al-muṣliḥ*)...." The process of reform (*iṣlāḥ*) is sometimes associated with God-consciousness (*taqwā*), righteousness (*birr*), pardon (*ᶜafw*) and faith (*īmān*), which constitute the psychological, spiritual and moral underpinnings of reformist action. As we read in *Sūrah al-Shūrā*, 42:40, "...whoever pardons [his foe] and makes peace (*wa aṣlaḥa*), his reward rests with God..." The Qur'an also makes clear the link between good works and faith. This may be seen in the oft-repeated mention of "...those who have attained to faith and do good works..." (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:25). After all, there can be no faith without righteous action, nor any righteous action without faith. This link is expressed in *Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt*, 49:10 in the command to "...make peace..." (*aṣliḥū*) between any two members of the faith community who are at odds with each other, and in *Sūrah Hūd*, 11:117 in the form of an incentive, to act righteously toward one another: "never would thy Sustainer destroy a community for wrong [beliefs alone] so long as its people behave righteously (*wa ahluhā muṣliḥūn*)."

3. *Iḥyāʾ*

The triliteral root *ḥ-y-y* (verbal nouns, *ḥayāh* and *ḥayawān*) is opposed to that of *m-w-t* (verbal nouns, *mawt* and *mawtān*), meaning death. And just as life and death ultimately affect human beings and animals, vegetation and the entire Planet, they also affect ideas, principles, doctrines and theories. The Qur'anic statement, "the blind and the seeing are not equal; nor are the depths of darkness and the light; nor the [cooling) shade and the scorching heat: and neither are equal the living and the dead" (*Sūrah Fāṭir*, 35:19-22) was explained by Thaʿlab with the words, "The term 'living' describes Muslims, while the term 'dead' describes those who deny the Islamic message." Lexicographer and grammarian al-Zajjāj (d. 311 AH/923 CE) likewise identified the living with believers, and the dead with non-believers. *Sūrah al-Anʿām*, 6:122 reads, "Is then, he who was dead [in spirit] and whom We thereupon gave life, and for whom We set up a light whereby he might see his way among men – [is then he] like one [who is lost] in darkness deep, out of which he cannot emerge?..." The person who is rightly guided is thus 'alive'. Similarly, ʿĀʾishah narrated that "during the last ten days of the month of Ramadan, the Prophet would tighten his belt, spend his nights in prayer (*wa aḥyā laylahu*), and waken his family [to pray with him]." As al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar pointed out in his commentary on this hadith, the phrase *aḥyā laylahu* (literally, "he brought his night to life") is used to imply that by spending his nights in prayer and other acts of devotion, the Prophet was bringing his own soul to life. According to a hadith narrated by Abū Umāmah, the Prophet once said, "There will come times of tribulation and testing in which a man will waken in the morning as a believer (*yuṣbiḥu muʾminan*), and go to bed an infidel (*wa yumsī kāfiran*) unless God quickens his soul through knowledge (*illā man aḥyāhu Allāhu bi al-ʿilm*)."

The effort to revive practices people once engaged in emulation of the Prophet, Islamic laws once enforced, and useful knowledge that was once widespread among members of the Muslim community but which has now given way to stagnation and lifeless tradition might be referred to by any number of terms. But whether we call it renewal, change, reform, revival, or renaissance, it performs the same function

and serves the same purpose.

4. *Baʿth*

The triliteral root *b-ʿ-th* bears the sense of evoking, stirring up, provoking, arousing, or awakening. In traditional usage, the verb *baʿatha* has been used to denote two principle meanings. One of these is to send, as in *Sūrah al-Aʿrāf*, 7:103, where God declares, "And after those [early people] We sent (*baʿathnā*) Moses..." and *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:213: "All mankind were once one single community; [then they began to differ –] whereupon God raised up (*baʿatha*) the prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners,..." The other meaning is to revive or resurrect, as in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:56: "But We raised you again (*baʿathnākum*) after you had been as dead,..."

5. *Nahḍah*

The triliteral root *n-h-ḍ* denotes upward movement. As such, the verb *nahaḍa* (verbal noun, *nahḍ* or *nuhūḍ*), like its derivative *intahaḍa*, means to rise, while the nouns *nahḍah*, *nahḍ* and *nuhūḍ* denote movement, rising, and the act of gathering strength. Hence, the *n-h-ḍ* root is fully consistent with those that preceded it (*taghyīr*, *iṣlāḥ*, *iḥyā'*, and *baʿth*), although it is used nowhere in the Qur'an. It is used rather in the Sunnah, most particularly in writings on the postures of ritual prayer (salah). However, given its frequent usage since the mid-twentieth century, the term *nahḍah*, rendered 'awakening' or 'renaissance', came to be associated with an intellectual movement led by a generation of thinkers referred to as 'pioneers of the awakening' (*ruwwād al-nahḍah*).

The French term *renaissance*, meaning 'rebirth', did not make its appearance in the French language until the turn of the nineteenth century. It should be noted, however, that the 'new birth' to which this term points had witnessed its beginnings in Italy, after which it spread throughout Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Renaissance manifested itself in the form of a broad renewal movement that encompassed the arts, the sciences, and literature. The European Renaissance, associated with the revival of the Greco-Roman heritage, thus became a renewal movement in the true sense of the word. As

philosopher Salah Qansawa has observed, the expression "the Age of the Renaissance" does not denote a sharply defined entity or set of practices on the part of people who consciously identified themselves as belonging to "the Age of the Renaissance," since this term itself did not come into being until nearly a century and a half later, at which time (1550 CE) it was coined by Italian historian Giorgio Vasari (d. 1574), who employed the term to describe the change that had been undergone by the art of visual representation. This period also came to be referred to as 'the Age of Enlightenment', a term coined by Immanuel Kant in a well-known essay he published in 1784 under the title, "What is Enlightenment?" Not long after this, the term "Enlightenment" became common parlance in the field of historical studies.

According to Egyptian philosopher Hasan Hanafi (born 1935), the Age of the Renaissance marked the end of what he terms 'the sources phase' and the beginning of the 'formation phase' of European consciousness. This latter phase reflected a break with the past as attempts were made to go beyond tradition as the sole source of knowledge and guide to action. In the Arab Muslim world we find a similar tension between reformist thought that is oriented toward the future, and religious reform with its orientation toward the past. Hence, we are experiencing some of the same problems that Europe faced during its Renaissance Age, yet without this implying any sort of parallel between the courses of these two civilizations.

In the words of al-Jabiri:

> Arabs' awareness of rebirth or renaissance is based essentially on the sense of contrast between the state of decadence and decline they are experiencing at present, and the awakening they see being offered to them by two alternative models ... [On one hand there is] the Arab-Islamic model which, over time, has continued to recede so deeply into the past that there are fewer and fewer objective reasons to think about it. [On the other hand we have] the European model, which continues to recede into the distant future as Western scientific and technological progress outstrips ours, with the result that the hope of catching up with it steadily diminishes...

Al-Jabiri draws a number of comparisons and analogies which suggest that he sees no essential difference between "Islamic civilization" and "Western civilization," as though those belonging to the former are so uprooted from their history and origins that they have gone in search of a "future" without foundation in either history or logic. However, there is no basis for assuming that the Western-style utopia to which a certain elite aspires would appeal to the wider population, who refuse to falsify their identities or divorce themselves from their historical roots. Al-Jabiri quotes the saying that, "Nothing will benefit the later generations of this [Muslim] community but what was beneficial for its earliest generation," along with the liberal Arab motto, "Nothing will help us to progress but what helped Europe to progress before us," where the word 'what' refers, among other things, to "the absence of any competition or opposition." On this point, sociologist and thinker Burhan Ghalioun (born 1945) asks:

> When we speak of the *nahḍah*, are we describing a reality? Or are we talking about a procedural concept? And if the latter, does this concept apply to something that has taken place, or to something that has not?

Questions such as these aim to identify the practical function of the concept of *nahḍah* in Arab-Islamic discourse. In Ghalioun's view, "there is no such thing as a 'renaissance age' (*ʿaṣr al-nahḍah*) in the Arab world, unless we want to apply this term to the break that has taken place with traditional Arab-Islamic thought, or to the new questions and issues some intellectuals have raised." Continuing in the same vein, Ghalioun writes:

> As I see it, the issue of *nahḍah* – renaissance, awakening – came to an end in the early twentieth century when the Arab states began coming under foreign occupation ... since the question went from being one of progress and of overcoming a cultural divide, to one of self-defense against the colonizer. When Arab countries began winning their independence we entered a new historical phase, and it was thought that the issue of *nahḍah* had regained its meaning as we began thinking and rethinking the development project.

Arab nationalist thinker Sati al-Husri (1882-1968) held that under the influence of what he termed "the inauthenticity of Westernized Arab intellectuals," the development process in the Arab world was weakened by "imitation and mimicry." Like Ghalioun, Munir Shafiq has raised vital questions having to do with the criteria on the basis of which we determine whether a *nahḍah* has taken place. If what we mean by 'the renaissance age' is an age in which the entire world experiences a renaissance, then the criterion by which it is measured has to be the entire world. If, on the other hand, what we are talking about is a renaissance in a particular country, then the criterion changes, and the claim that a renaissance has occurred can rightly be challenged if the 'renaissance' being spoken of has brought harm to other peoples.