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Preface

The third issue of the Logos-A magazine is a subsequent step in the chronology of its publication; in the geometry of thought, it contemplates the point where thesis and antithesis find a synthesis, where movement becomes a form and voice takes on the importance of a testimony. This third issue of the Logos-A magazine comes as an invitation to pause amidst the noise of our era and to return to what remains unwavering: the word that builds the world.

In a strange time when reality is fragmented at the speed of light and where modern man often feels himself at the theater of his own consciousness, Logos-A continues to arrange (the Logos) within the chaos. The pages of this issue are collections of profound texts, but also stations of a meditative journey. They are attempts to decipher the other, the time and oneself, through a sincere dialogue that is not afraid of the great existential questions.

“Thinking means daring to navigate into the unknown of oneself, holding as a compass the light of reason and the great weight of ethics.”

From pure philosophy to reflections on culture and society, this volume attempts to develop superficial rules to touch the essence. We believe that culture is not an aesthetic luxury, but an ontological urgency — a way of being and surviving as free beings.

We invite you to not be just passive spectators while reading, but fellow travelers in this search for light. Because, ultimately, every line written here only makes sense when it is ignited in your mind and consciousness.

The Editorial Board
Logos-A

ISLAMIC THOUGHT FACING THE 21st CENTURY'S CHALLENGES

Rešid Hafizović

Abstract

In the 21st century, Muhammad's s.a.w.s. *Ummah* is struck by severe outer and inner challenges, the latest being a new form of the American-Israeli imperialism which threatens the world peace, modern civilization, and the 'Muslim world' as such. Second challenge is the harmful influence of the Western European epistemic imperialism that deleted, from the Muslim memory the remembrance of the most luxurious intellectual heritage from the 'golden age' of the thinking Islam and set up a regime of producing 'knowledge of endosmosis' which isn't, as it is useless and without a purpose. The third challenge are multiple and deep divisions in the 'Muslim world' of the doctrinal, juridical, sectarian and ideological nature. They are a serious threat on the path to achieving a pan-Muslim unity on the principles of the original *Ummah*. But, perhaps the most serious challenge before the Muslim world of today is the complete reinterpretation of the tradition of belief and tradition of thinking of today's Muslims. A requirement without which it is impossible to make is a serious reform in the domain of Islamic upbringing and education which in itself is the challenge of all challenges in regard to the existing state of affairs in the indicated domains of Muslim epistemic and ethically-moral culture of ascension.

Keywords: *Muslim Ummah, Contemporary Challenges, Epistemic Imperialism, Islamic Education Reform*

Outer Challenges

Muhammad's (peace be upon him) *Ummah* and the thought it harbors today, if at all, find themselves in a time context in which challenges overtake each other. It is almost impossible to determine which one is more important than the other when it comes to the Muslim confronting them. The concept of *Ummah*, however, today already belongs to the predominance of pure and unrealized ideals. Today, it has almost no contact with the real life of the 'Muslim world'. It is a mere 'floating signifier' of a universal pan-Muslim identity, which does not have its own recognizable geographical homeground. That homeground is hardly even found on the geographical map by which one should recognize that geopolitical entity called the 'Muslim world' today. All the more so because Muslims today are scattered everywhere: in exile and in migration flows, or enslaved in their native countries of the 'Muslim world' by the despotic, dictatorial and corrupt political and religious elites. They do not even possess enough spiritual substance within themselves to be at least called cultural and historical heirs of the former great Islamic empire from the time of the Umayyads and Abbasids, and even less the spiritual descendants of great Muslim empires such as the Muslim Caliphate in Andalusia and the great Safavid, Mughal or Ottoman Empires in the East. In all these political entities, the concept of *Ummah* had real ground under its feet and constituted the spiritual flavor and religious and cultural-civilizational link of all Muslims across the entire geographical latitude of that time. But this is not the case today.

In addition to this common spiritual and cultural-civilizational denominator, the Muslims of that time were also adorned with the spirit of universal citizenship, a cosmopolitan spirit and belonging to Muhammad's (peace be upon him) *Islamopolis*, and a common luxurious spiritual culture that was built upon on daily basis by their valid tradition of thought. A special linkage between them were the 'Islamic languages' such as Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish, and even Urdu, in which the wisest Muslims of the time created and with their cognitive, cultural and civilizational advances brought Muslims to the very religious, scientific, cultural, civilizational and other rooftops of the world. (Dabashi, 2023, p. 255).

But, in today's 'Muslim world' there are no 'Islamic languages' anymore, and the flourishing spiritual culture that these languages once spread to all

four corners of the world cannot be recognized even in traces there today. Even worse is the fact that today's Muslims in the 'Muslim world' are not at all capable of at least rediscovering the former high spiritual, intellectual culture of the thinking Islam, because they no longer remember it. Exceptions to this fact today can be only three countries of the 'Muslim world': the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. These three countries not only cultivate a culture of remembering and promoting in the public space of the achievements of the most brilliant pages from the history of the thinking, intellectual Islam and comprehensive forms of cognitive culture, but they also raise the level of their military defense culture every day, notwithstanding of their enemies, which guarantees them survival and a dignified life in their own country and in their own spiritual identity. If only they could create a common economic market, following the example of the European Union, which, as an economic, geostrategic, political and military structure, rose above the borders of European nation states, these three Muslim countries would create a solid economic basis for re-translating the ideals of the *Ummah* from the state *in potentia* to the state *in actu*. In contrast to these three countries of the 'Muslim world', the rest of the countries of that world mostly dwell in the predominance of the post-colonial dream and in the cognitive illusion of producing post-colonial knowledge of 'endosmosis', knowledge which is not that, which is useless and which nobody needs (Dabashi, 2008).

However, the situation could be even worse for the 'Muslim world' at this moment. Muslims today live in a world ruled by ignorants, thugs, moral freaks and people without any human integrity. By destroying all the norms of international law and expanding the strategy of the most brutal state terror, two political regimes in the world today are becoming the most serious threat, not only to peace in the world, but also to the survival of human civilization: the political regime in Washington, which blindly and aggressively draws a new map of the world order, and the terrorist regime in Tel Aviv, that *map cancer* in the tissue of the Muslim world, which for decades has been a 'fuse of intrigue' (*al-Ma'idah*, 82) and a source of anarchy and terror in the Middle East and beyond. This new form of imperialism is not only changing the face of the 'Muslim world' today, but is also slowly changing the face of Europe and the West, as it already attacks important territories in Western Europe itself as well. With the disappearance of the old form of imperialism of the previous two centuries, the new American-Israeli imperialism is undis-

guisedly erasing the West, but at the same time its former binary imperialist vocabulary too. The *West* as we knew it until now is disappearing, but also the *Rest* of the world, referring primarily to the ‘world of Islam’, a term coined by the Western Orientalism of the time for the needs of the then imperialist West in its colonial and imperial enslavement of the ‘world of Islam’.

Now this uncontrolled American-Israeli imperialism is slowly introducing Europe and the rest of the world into a post-Western history and into a new post-Western world. How will the European peoples, who themselves are becoming a target of the new American-Israeli imperialism, live in that world and what will the new European societies be like in that new post-Western world? What will it mean *to be* a Muslim in the societies of this post-Western world, any Muslim who, due to insecurity in his own homeland, wants to leave and integrate into post-Western European societies? How will Muslim peoples even live in such a ‘Muslim world’ that, also, is already disappearing in the context of the new imperialist American-Israeli imagination?

It is clear that Muslim peoples must build a new world within what is vaguely and indeterminately called the ‘Muslim world’ today. This new post-‘Muslim world’ must have completely new governance structures, valid political and religious hierarchies, a new public discourse that will restore into the public space all those ‘Islamic languages’ which will bring back that cosmopolitan and multicultural spirit of the glorious Muslim culture, science, civilization, and even of the genuine religious scientific culture, even if these ‘Islamic languages’ are now recognized as English, German, French, and Italian, since today it is in these languages that the most prominent Muslim intellectuals in the West and Europe write the world literature, science, philosophy, literature, poetry, and more. The *intellectual sun* of the thinking Islam is now, undoubtedly, shining in the West and in Europe thanks to these ‘new Islamic languages’, and it would therefore be natural that the light of this *intellectual sun* would illuminate and shine the physical and spiritual space of the new, upcoming *Islamopolis*, which will be established on the map of the former ‘Muslim world’.

But the condition of all conditions for this to happen is the inevitable need to overthrow the old and establish a new regime of producing knowledge in the new *Islamopolis* with its own canons of thought, significantly different from those previously prescribed by five Western European universities, which had the title deed to all the knowledge of the world (Dabashi, 2013, ch. 1&2).

It is precisely this old regime of producing knowledge that has, over the past two hundred years, removed Muslims from all the rooftops of the world, subjugated them, and destroyed their most creative energy. Through two centuries of Western European colonialism over the 'Muslim world', the colonial regime of producing knowledge in the 'Muslim world' has erased from the young Muslim generations the best intellectual memory of all those values of universal Muslim scholarship that for centuries made Muslims the spiritual vanguard and the cultural-civilizational beacon of the world. Therefore, today's young Muslim generations must be re-taught that layered language of paramount Muslim scientific culture, science, spirituality, even the language of high scientific religious culture, which illuminated not only the former Muslim metropolises and cities within the Muslim Caliphate in Andalusia and the Islamic Empire in the East, but also numerous European cities before they became witnesses to the false myth of the universal 'Enlightenment' modernity of Europe, which ultimately ended in the horrors of the Holocaust and brutal slaughter and bloodshed on the European continent.

If the young Muslim generations in the new *Islamopolis*, as a synonym for the Islamic *Ummah*, or in the new post-Western societies of Europe, if it survives the latest brutal imperialism of America and Israel, could return to the *language* of the former most brilliant thinking tradition of Muslims, by virtue of that *language* as once *koine* or *lingua franca* of Muslim spirituality and culture, they will convey to themselves and to the world the cognitive fullness that the treasuries of that *language* keep in themselves, though still deeply buried, along with the entire intellectual tradition of Muslims, in the layered historical oblivion of the 'Muslim world', an oblivion that has its roots in the times of Western European colonialism. With that and such a *language* they will gain a new worldview, because the worldview of *language* as such is equally the worldview of the world, the world they once lost, and now they will regain it with the power of the *new language* that facilitates the reading of history and the world as a once truly lived experience (Gadamer, 1975, 399-401).

It is the worldview that was once developed by the Muslim *Islamicate* Empire with its cosmopolitan spirit that included all forms of cognitive culture, including those multicultural forms of other and different cultures within the Islamic societies of the time, which did not hesitate to incorporate into their contextual organon the Qur'anic narrative as well as the culture of remembering the very *Muhammadan* messages, refracted, not only through

the religious, but also through the cultural-civilizational, social, sacred and secular aspects of the daily life within the cosmopolitan and plural 'Islamic societies' (Hodgson, 1974, p. 59; Dabashi, 2013, p. 159).

Inner Challenges

The *epistemic colonialism* of the Western-European-centric mind poses one of the most serious challenges to the Muslim thought in the twenty-first century. The Muslim response to this challenge requires the immediate decolonization of the Muslim mind through a process of systematic deconstruction of Western knowledge and the introduction of a new regime of producing knowledge in Muslim societies. Western European knowledge, which has been introduced into every pore of life within the 'Muslim world' through the process of colonialism, and especially through the epistemic imperialism, is the knowledge of a civilization, Western European, whose whereabouts lie in the religion of Israel, in the Greek culture, and in the Roman law (Reilly, 2010, Foreword).

In parallel with the process of decolonizing the Muslim mind and deconstructing Western-European-centric knowledge, the thinking Muslims must also initiate a process of revitalizing their own intellectual heritage and establishing a new *modus intelligendi* in the categories and concepts that are most directly derived from that intellectual heritage. This latter process should primarily involve the sphere of education and culture in present Muslim societies. The language of the rediscovered intellectual Muslim heritage has already demonstrated its richness to the extent that it was capable of interpreting and preserving the Greek philosophical heritage during the European 'Dark Ages', and later transmitting it to the Latin West in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Shortly afterwards, the language of the Muslim intellectual heritage, as well as the heritage itself, through a peculiar 'intellectual suicide', disappeared from the public space due to the emergence of a dysfunctional Muslim culture rooted in a completely deformed apologetic theology and moral infantilization of Muslims. The door to free and creative thought was closed, and the luxurious and layered, multiform spiritual culture of intellectual Islam was already becoming a distant memory. The public space of Muslim societies was dominated by an unbearable intellectual void that would soon be filled by Eurocentric scientific, cultural-civilizational and other Eurocentric values that would bring with themselves Europe's and West's colonialism and epistemic imperialism.

As to what extent has the post-colonial regime of producing knowledge of the 'endosmosis' in the Muslim world brainwashed young intellectuals and emptied them of the once glorious intellectual heritage of Muslims, especially those who live in Europe and the West today, is best evidenced by the statement of a British lord who, back in 1835, stated the following: "A single shelf of a well-stocked European library is more valuable than the entire native literature of the Indian subcontinent and the Arab-Muslim world." Of course, such a saying can only be uttered by a mind that does not know that the former Muslim intellectual heritage developed and supported that Muslim education whose purpose was reflected in the perfection of the soul, the refinement of culture, language, human character, the improvement of the skills of thinking and speaking, the contemplation of the cosmos, and the cultivation of universal wisdom (S. H. Nasr, 1987).

The second great internal challenge for the Islamic thought in this century is the urgent need to make the present-day Muslims clearly and exactly aware of the difference between what Western European civilization strives for and what Islamic civilization has always strived for. Islamic civilization has always strived to create a kind of God's kingdom on Earth, and the foretaste of the realization of such an ideal is the macrocosm that is built upon God's Beautiful Names and Attributes as the leverages of earthly existence and as the ontological bed into which God has placed each of His creatures. On the other hand, man in Islam, in his most perfect epistemological and ethical-moral realization, is the essence of the macrocosmic being and the shadow of God's Beautiful Names and Attributes. His task is to responsibly manage the macrocosm in his full professional dedication, as a universal shepherd (Bukhārī, *Jum'a*, 11; Muslim, *Imāra*, 20), and to respect the ontological Islam (*fitrah*) in it and in the primordial nature of all creation, on the one hand, as well as the epistemological and ethical-moral Islam in the primordial nature of every human being in which he was originally born (Bukhārī, *Janā'iz*, 80; Muslim, *Qadar*, 22), on the other.

Unlike Islamic civilization, which strives to create God's kingdom on Earth, Western European civilization strives to realize man's kingdom on Earth, in which man becomes the criterion of all things. Living in the dominance of the values of such Western European civilization in the era of colonialism and its epistemic imperialism, Muslims were completely unprepared for their encounter with Western European modernity and postmodernity, and

in their own interpretation of the sources of faith, especially the Qur'anic Revelation, they came under the influence of a postmodernist view of it. Thus, it became unacceptable for them to recognize the constitutive role of the Angel of Revelation – Jibreel-i Amin – in the process of sending the Revelation to the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) heart, so they denied the very *verbalization* of the Qur'anic Text to the Angel of Revelation and put it into the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) mouth. Such views were shared in particular by Muhamamed Arkoun, Hamid Abu Zayd, Abed Jabri, Fazlur Rahman, 'Abd al-Karim Soroush, etc. Such a postmodernist Muslim view could not possibly have come from the substantive organon of the Islamic intellectual heritage, which is now being rediscovered, but it certainly could and did come from the kind of knowledge that epistemic imperialism produced in the Muslim world during the period of Western European colonialism. Therefore, the emergence of Muslim postmodernism in the interpretive thinking of today's Muslims, in the image of scientific criticism of the Biblical text, represents a much greater and more serious challenge to Muslim thought in this century than did the Western European Orientalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as today's post-Orientalism, for which knowledge in the West becomes a brutal power in the service of the implementation of a new imperial terror by America and Israel (Dabashi, 2008).

No less serious challenge to Muslim thought today is the emergence of sectarianism in the 'Muslim world', both in the doctrinal, as well as in the legal and ideological sense of the word. The selective preference for legal schools, the five *madhhabs* in the Islamic *Ummah*, has become so dominant that today's Muslim 'ulama' barely even pay attention to the primary sources of religion and the crowning aspects of the Islamic interpretative tradition as such. Therefore, the Islamic thinking tradition today has been reduced to barely seven percent of the total content organon of the Qur'anic Text, and is recognizable only and only in the so-called legal version of the 'thinking' Islam. The overemphasized selective preference for legal schools in Islam has, among others, become a serious cause for the disunity of Muslims, because the *madhhabs* in the 'Muslim world' today have become insurmountable walls of division that will always stand in the way of the unification of Muslims and the realization of the ideals of the Islamic *Ummah* in accordance with the ideas and messages of the primary sources of Islamic belief. Reopening of the door to the development of universal, interdisciplinary creative thinking (*ijtihad*) according to the param-

eters of the rich spiritual culture of the former Muslim intellectual heritage is a priority for today's Muslims. Empty chatter about sectarian affiliation and differences between sects will not lead today's Muslims anywhere. Such fruitless discussions will never develop the comprehensive and multiform cognitive culture that the educational institutions of the 'Muslim world' so desperately need, including that religious scientific culture of which one cannot find even a trace there today. Such a type of cognitive culture, for example, in the religious educational institutions of Muslims can only be offered by creative thinking in the sphere of the philosophy of Shariah law, philosophical-theological and religious hermeneutics, religious psychology, religious philosophy, religious and theological-philosophical epistemology, and the like. But today one cannot find even a trace of these cognitive disciplines over there, much less nurtured teachers who would be capable of teaching others on them.

Religious and ideological divisions in today's 'Muslim world' are so entrenched and ossified that it is difficult to say whose incapacity is greater in potentially solving and overcoming this problem among Muslims: the one of the religious or that of the secular Muslim intelligentsia. Both of them spend too much time and energy in dialogue with others, but there is no dialogue among the Muslims themselves. That is why it was not difficult to plant a bone of contention in the form of various puritanical scourges like ISIL, Takfiri, Wahhabi and Salafi groups in the very fabric of the 'Muslim world' – those paid agents of Mossad, CIA and other Western European intelligence services, who by their destructive actions reshaped the traditional map of the 'Muslim world' and contributed to the thorough destruction of several important Muslim countries: Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and in most recent times they are trying to do the same with the Islamic Republic of Iran. To be honest, some countries of the 'Muslim world', driven by an unbridled desire to impose themselves on the rest of the world as major regional powers, partook in this dishonorable mission of theirs in a certain way. Their bizarre policy still contributes to the fact that, while the rest of the world, in the latest American-Israeli imperialism of force and terror over the existing world order and international law, is aligning itself into new geopolitical and economic blocs, firmly consolidating its ranks and defense strategy, only Muslims silently watch as their *geographical map crumbles* and fragments with some new self-proclaimed states that are recognized only by the proven enemies of Islam and Muslims.

Everyone in the 'Muslim world' almost regularly speaks of the Islamic *Ummah*, but everyone there does everything to ensure that this ideal is never realized within their geographical area. More important to everyone are their national, tribal, cultural and ideological boundaries that they place before the concept of *Ummah*, even though this concept, with its layered value universalism, erases all kinds of boundaries between Muslim communities, creating a unique spiritual, political, economic, scientific and cultural-civilizational space. However, it seems that the ideal of the Islamic *Ummah* has been understood much better by everyone else in the world, but Muslims. As much as the European Union, for example, after its political, geo-strategic, military and economic constitution, is still searching for a common cultural identity under which each individual national culture of European peoples will be recognized, it already today mostly and more closely resembles to what the 'Muslim world' could have been transformed into, if only Muslims had wished for it (de Madariaga, 1952).

Although all the challenges presented above within the 'Muslim world' are extremely serious and huge, the greatest and most serious challenge is what we would call the elementary lack of upbringing and education, especially the lack of an interdisciplinary and comprehensive cognitive culture among Muslims today. Here we refer to that form of cognitive culture that is not based on the Western-European values of *epistemic imperialism* from which the Muslim mind must liberate itself as soon as possible, but to that cognitive culture that will clearly define Islamic science as such, its form and purpose, its methodology, so that Muslim researchers, scholars, scientists and cultural workers can be raised and nurtured on that form of cognitive culture. The reason is quite simple: the aforementioned form of cognitive culture with an Islamic foretoken is based on the values of Islam as a universal religious culture that God chose for the last spiritually mature human race (*Āl'Imrān*, 19, 85). It is a religious culture that sediments within itself a unique and unparalleled system of beliefs, a special worldview and style of life, an authentic monotheistic understanding of God, life, the eternal world, culture, society and the community of believers. All these values are primarily understood from the perspective of the inexhaustible content of the comprehensive and eternal *Qur'anic logos* as the only surviving world-historical witness to what God truly spoke to the human race, whose spirit not only illuminated and forever vaulted the pages of sacred history, but also ontologically founded and permeated the entire macrocosm and every form of existence in it (Talal, 1983, p. 22).

Given the well-known fact that the 'Muslim world' today mainly dwells in the dominance of the so-called juridical Islam (*Islām fiqhī*), that is, at the constitutive minimum of the overall content of the believing and the thinking religious culture of Islam, for the new face of the 'Muslim world', for the comprehensive space of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) *macro-cosmic mosque* (Muslim, *Masājid*, 4) as a synonym of the space of all-Muslim cognitive search, for the future Islamic *Ummah* it would be necessary in today's 'Muslim world' to first raise those Muslim scientists who would profile themselves in the field of secular cognitive culture, if one may call it that at all. They are the ones who would move Muslim societies forward with their research and cognitive endeavors. They are not even the so-called 'Doctors of Law' who produce empty legal rulings (*fatwas*) on a daily basis that mean nothing and are forgotten the next day; nor are they the so-called 'traditional ulama' whose below-average intelligence, for example, prioritizes arranging the graves of people whose human and ethical-moral integrity is questionable, instead of trumpeting every day from the *mimbers* and *pulpits* into the Muslims' ears that education and upbringing are a strict and lifelong divine imperative for every individual Muslim, an imperative that in divine Revelation even precedes those imperatives that command Muslims to perform prayer and all the remaining pillars or spiritual institutions of Islamic belief. The aforementioned below-average 'mind' of the so-called 'traditional ulama' simply scolds from the religious hierarchies in the 'Muslim world', as well as here. In order for the quality of this 'wisdom' to be raised to a somewhat more advanced level, its heirs must, first of all, be prepared to receive an *intellectual zakah* every day from those Muslim scholars with a rich and comprehensive cognitive culture. Perhaps, finally, they will see and understand not only how much they do not know, but also how anachronistic their current educational curricula in religious educational institutions are and to what extent they too contribute to the production of useless 'knowledge of endosmosis', the kind of knowledge with which Western European *epistemic imperialism* has been filling the space of the post-colonial 'Muslim world' for centuries (Dabashi, 2015).

The sooner the most responsible among Muslims realize that it is high time to refresh and bring the school curricula in religious educational institutions in our country and in the 'Muslim world' into harmony with the challenges of today, the more likely the spirit of a true religious *scientific culture* and the

ideas of extraordinary Muslim scientists such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn ‘Arabi, Rūmi and the like will return among them. Without this, Muslims and their religious hierarchies can only continue to dream about the ideal of the Islamic *Ummah*, the cosmopolitan spirit of the *Islamicate culture* of the former Islamic Empire and the cosmopolitan spirit of the Muslim Caliphate of Andalusia. Provided that they are even capable of dreaming such dreams anymore!

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THEOLOGICAL VIEW ON THE ABSOLUTE

Ismail Bardhi

“Say: “He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born. Nor is there to Him any equivalent”.

(Qur’an, 112: 1-4)

Abstract

The issue of the Absolute in its content has always been not only a theological and philosophical challenge but a challenge for the culture and civilization as well. Theology, by its own profundity, has frequently attempted to accept it as a spotless issue between the naïve and the wisdom, not because has not comprehended it, but because theology has been sentient of the fact that it is impossible to make this issue tangible. Each time that philosophy, with the self-granted looseness, has tried to repudiate the issue of the Absolute, it has in fact acknowledged it. For as much as the philosophy has speculated with this issue that much has been plunged with torment in its own profundities, while rendering the thought through its language sometimes attractive even in ridiculous ways. Young philosophers in their ageing ceased being so enthusiastic in treating the issue of the Absolute – the Absolute exhausted the philosophy. This writing presents some theological reflections on the Absolute based on the signs that the Revelation has presented in the shape of the continuous guidance for the faithful.

Keywords: *The Absolute, Theological Reflections, Divine Revelation, Philosophical Inquiry, Transcendence*

Every movement presupposes a mandatory beginning which, on the other hand, in itself represents either only the end of passivity or a pursuit carried by ardent desire and permeated with the category of command in accordance

only with something that is eternal and absolute. Every beginning presupposes movement somewhere; movement, intention and ardent desire to go further.

The movement that we will begin here is of a comparative nature and we can certainly count on arriving at the end of a path, which is shaped by the finite and which necessarily flows into the finite; but the other path, which represents the highest possible or impossible arrival, the arrival into the absurd, is shaped by possibility, and everything that possibility shapes is shaped in accordance with infinity (an-Nasafi, 1993, pp. 9-19; M.M. Sharif, 1979, p. 17-22).

This movement of ours also necessarily considers the freedom (Jaspers, 1973, pp. 172-180), which we have, because the order, the duty and the need to go further, the necessity of freedom demands and claims, and we are free in spirit and by that intuitive freedom in thought we can dive a little deeper and go further from this rigid reality, whose characteristic is changeability, while whose official name is determined by the Revelation.

The entire Revelation is a permanent call, which removes any doubt and impossibility of reaching the end, namely the beginning of the essence – the Absolute. There are numerous verses in the Qur'an that speak about this, on which many works have been written, for example: Abu Al-Hasan Al-Ashari, *Bit polemike sa otpadnicima i inovatorima*, Sarajevo, 2000.

That very long and very distant path, to which all other relative paths lead us, in its final destination and in its meaning leads us to God and emphasizes only Him. "Everywhere I looked/ I saw clearly that it's you/ I found you where I sought you/ The great and true God" (Frashëri, 1986, pp. 192-197).

That path by which religion is meant has a unique feature, in fact it presupposes in its essence the esoteric weaving or consciousness through which infinity is presupposed. Following that path presupposes knowledge only up to that point, until that path is reached, and then man sets out on that path by another knowledge, by the consciousness of his soul, as a freedom which brings him closer to his God and takes him into the hidden depths where the heart and soul are silent, while reason and logic stop, fall, surrender and understand nothing more. Any kind of knowledge, which is based on objective purpose, must necessarily take into account religion as a special type of knowledge, which itself determines the boundaries of science, philosophy and art (Kahteran, 2002, pp. 5-36). Knowledge founded on reason only in

the domain of the real, the visible, directs the individual from that path, the path of religion, and the whole of human life must pass to reach that path. However, sometimes a person remains alone on the path of his whole life and, what is even more tragic, on the wrong and finite one (Ibn Tufejl, 1985, pp. 137-158).

To follow the path of religion means to be in the pure naturalness (*hanif*), the Nature of God, in which He has created the universe and man in it. Such a path is infinite and forms every individual who is on it, by the infinite. At the very foundation of that path is the principle of eternity and therefore he who arrives to religion (that path), to the naturalness and originality, which he has lost with his moral decline, he has certainly arrived closer to the pleasure of God. And can there be anything more than this?

Can a person be anything more than a genius in religion, or religion's warrior, as Abraham (peace be upon him) was?

To tread the path of religion and to remain on it until the end of one's life means to stand in the face of the whole world, all sciences, philosophy and art, and to remain strong, powerful, and able to say: "Who are you in reality?", just as Abraham (peace be upon him) was able to do this. To follow this path means to lead oneself through faith to the absolute state of consciousness and to know that you are in the face of the whole world and all the values in it, to be aware that you have accepted what is absurd to the world, and everything to you; to lose all that this world offers and again and in spite of it to gain all that stands in the face of this world and that shapes and exhausts it against its will (Qur'an, 6: 74-89).

Faith, therefore, with its ultimate goal, is absurd for this everyday life that consumes reason, it is pure naturalness for the heart and soul, for the logic of the highest world. The Quran presents the essential definition of faith, religion, in most cases in a language appropriate to reason, but we also have moments that are above every dimension, such as the case of the sacrifice of Ismail (peace be upon him) by his father, Ibrahim (peace be upon him). This is the purest, most "dangerous" dimension, which is even above the moral norm, not to mention other norms.

The Quran presents the essential definition of faith, religion, in most cases in a language appropriate to reason, but we also have moments that are above every dimension, such as the case of the sacrifice of Ismail (peace be upon him) by his father, Ibrahim (peace be upon him). This is the purest, most

“dangerous” dimension, which is even above the moral norm, not to mention other norms. Of course, it is surprising that what is at the foundation of this world and by which it is shaped, is at the same time also opposite of it, as an inconceivable phenomenon, a reality outside reason and outside logic, respectively the truth that cannot be known to the end due to impossibility and limitation or fear before that truth.

However, although the path of religion or faith in itself and in its essence is mysterious, efforts to discover it, to analyze and define it have also occurred at the level of science, philosophy and especially art. All of them are interested in the truth, but not all of them have departed with the truth, and therefore they have not been able to reach it, even though it seems to them that they have contemplated, thought of and realized even the most mysterious things. The first views, thoughts and inquiries of man have been directed towards metaphysics (Motahhari, 2003). Man, so small and moreover limited as he is, sought the Whole, something that is higher and more powerful, which also formed him and placed him where he is, until the appointed time. He wanted to grasp the irrational with *ratio*, to investigate and discover with logic that which degrades him and does not accept the logic of this world. Man tried to do this since he was in paradise and because of this inattentive, ardent, crazy desire for eternity and insurmountable fame, he lost that wonderful abode. Although this was an absurdity in the true sense of the word and still remains so, man tries to understand with reason that where human speech is lost and where language is confused, where everything is silent and in innocent amazement he asks himself secretly or openly: “What could be that which I do not know, while longing drives me to know and discover it”? (Karahasan, 2002).

Science, and by this I mean science as it should be and not as it is, explains this world by finding in it the laws and regularities by which it helps man in his right orientation, which, we must accept, also represents the essence of human living (Hegel, 1962, p. 431; Šušnjić, 1999, pp. 17-35). It therefore reveals all that is and that can symbolize its essence here and this is sufficient for the one who does not bother life in the way “invisible to ordinary human eyes”, to feel something deeper, that as an idea exists somewhere in an environment that does not accept the various changes of this world and that does not exhaust itself in its personal symbol, through which it reaches the category of space and time, the characteristic of which is of a relative or determined nature (Werner, 2003, pp. 685-692). Such science necessarily and primarily

presupposes the moral basis or simply morality as an all-valuable law, the highest value of which is God.

However, if we talk about today's science, let me not say that things are overturned here, but they are completely different. Today's science or scientificness is a real deformation of that genuine science mentioned above. First of all, it is no longer in the service of man, life, or itself, but is in the service of a goal whose official designation could be aimlessness, hopelessness, self-destruction (Spengler, 1991). It has started the movement towards that goal through extremely radical changes carried out during its journey. It has changed that moral basis as a source element in its own orientation during its involvement in the divine order and the discovery of that order that reigns in nature. Its basis is morals or morality without God, the highest value of which is the society composed of dispersed individuals loosely tied to the external repressive bond of law, while the ultimate goal of that morality is the interest that is realized through science guided by precisely determined and pre-programmed paths, which simultaneously follow various artificial policies and the same schizoid demagoguery.

Science no longer prepares or foresees a beautiful future for humanity, but the path it is taking foresees inevitable destruction. Firstly, it reduced man to a machine (Lametr) serving itself, then it replaced him with a machine in the full sense of the word, so that man became its slave, whom it once used and now does not need him even as a slave, becoming even superior to him, since it is less vulnerable. In the end, that machine destroys itself. That is, firstly, it deprived man of one component and that inevitable one – it left him Godless and prepared his inevitable destruction. Namely, it theoretically brought about that destruction by denying the soul and acknowledging only the body. Perhaps it would have accepted both his soul and his body when, through reason, man, who is in the absolute presence of God, could distance himself from the absolute and look at him somewhere “from the side” and thus form a permanent image of him. [For more, see: Izetbegoviq, 1993, pp. 91-95; Spengler, 1991, p. 14].

But what would have happened? First of all, this is almost absurd, and even to think about it and do it would have been more than tragic for man. When he manages to do this, man would become completely alienated, he would forget this reality and would certainly never return, or at least he would not have the desire to return; he would disappear without a trace, and if he finally reached some pre-image of God and thereby proved it, he would automat-

ically realize it and in this way would insert it into history, bring it into the process of the event, with which God would necessarily have to exhaust himself and in the end die because automatically from the moment of Him was proven, he would no longer be God. Thus, man with a dead God would lose everything, both freedom and the meaning of life, but he himself would also be lost. But, this is why God can never be proven. Such a thing could only happen if those crazy ideas of Sartre and Nietzsche (Kusić, 1980, p. 14 and 19; Jelkić, 2001, pp. 103-134) were true, because in them everything ends in nothingness, or at Nietzsche, God must necessarily die in order for man to become free, or rather to become a superman. “I teach you about the superman. Man is something that must be surpassed. What have you done to surpass him? The superman is the meaning of the earth.”

Every scientific truth is of a relative nature, while every newly discovered scientific truth is at the same time a personal loss of science and a degradation of that previous truth, which in the final sense can be reduced to a supposition. However, every such relative scientific truth no longer serves that positive knowledge acquired through empirical means, as a generally valid positive experience, but it serves certain groups of people or systems, so that there is no longer that aim for the conquest of man and his reformation and elevation to the level of “superman”, but the ultimate goal of all this is interest, which necessarily gives science the sign of bias, so that it is increasingly reduced to the handmaid of politics on the basis of which Godless morality is permeated with apodictic subjectivity. [For more, see: Šušnjić, 1999; Niče, 1962].

Now we inevitably come to a very important point, where the boundaries of science are reduced and where the plane of philosophy and art begins. Now we must put things on a comparative basis, because we have reached precisely the problematic that is thematically determined and in which the relationship where faith and philosophy stand opposite of each other is emphasized (Panenberg, 2003, pp. 15-27). This relationship is in fact the deepest and strongest bond that connects the various contradictions in the world, reconciles them and rises above them, making in the process the necessary synthesis, and thanks to this synthesis harmony is established in the world. This relationship or the middle path is that divine nature specified in the Qur’an and on which God created the world and man in it and made it the only right path that leads to Him, which is based on morality, the only source of which is Revelation, while the highest value is God.

That path can never be arrived at directly and at once, because man is located in the middle between two paths, and from that middle one reaches at one of the two mentioned paths by accepting different possibilities, which shape him by the path he has chosen during the process of his personal happening.

However, one thing is clear, that it is in human nature to strive to attain the highest, the most valuable, and the most lasting. This has been proven by the moral decline.

Since man is a synthesis, or rather, he was comprised by dualism, which demanded the indestructibility of synthesis, two paths, two possibilities were necessary to please human free will. Without such dualism, human history would also be impossible, while it was weaved at the moment when gender (sexuality) was defined as the second consequence of the moral fall with the first sin. Here we are specifically interested only in the starting point of man or his movement towards this distant goal that takes place through different possibilities. Here we will talk precisely about the two movements or the two departure points in the attempt to attain the truth.

Viewed from the framework of Western experience, we can immediately conclude that there have been two departure points or two possibilities through which man should have begun his movement on the plane of knowing God, only to experience God and not to witness or show Him with any imagery. The first possibility is philosophy, while the other is religion or Revelation – Christianity (Panenberg, 2003, pp. 79-95; Brajičić, 1996, pp. 23-45).

Philosophy has departed and is still departing by the assumption in the form of the question: “what is that which is higher and how?” That is, it does not depart from the truth. Or perhaps it is a truth of hypothetical importance. With the assumption it was necessary to go further into the imagination of God himself, so that God in philosophy is imagined, remembered, realized and finally realized, with which he was necessarily introduced into the process of the happening, while the latter necessarily leads to the end. Thus, God in philosophy was exhausted and died, by which man again lost everything, while philosophical faith and the faith of philosophers continued to be founded on the assumption accompanied by the hope and ardent desire for the return of the “absent God”, who must prevent the destruction, which philosophy and science had already theoretically foreseen and felt. Jaspers later, in the field of existentialist philosophy, would save the honor of philosophy by not allowing

the possibility of witnessing God, “because the witnessed God no longer continues to be a God.” (Jaspers, 1973, pp. 151-162).

In Christianity, God did not experience a better fate. In other words, Christianity is founded on revelation and has departed with the truth, being the truth that God is and nothing more. That truth had to be attained, and in order to attain it, the spiritual leaders, instead of following it, they were not satisfied from the beginning with the truth that God is, but tried to go further from the truth, so that they transformed it into a supposition and asked questions like the philosophers: what is God like? Thus they also started imagining God, so that they finally made Him a sensible presence of this world, introduced Him into history by placing Him into the process of the happening, testing him with evil and allowing the possibility of his sacrifice for humanity after he had become a sensible presence, buried God; so that only “it” remained incarnated in the hearts of Christians as the eternal thought of His sacrifice that the human race might live. Christianity buried God much earlier than Nietzsche and Sartre, so that they could only put an end to “it” as the eternal idea of the murdered God, by overemphasizing the need for the superman, whose end is in nothingness or self-destruction, which will occur with the destruction of this world as a synthesis, which was prepared and promoted by the ugly separation of science on the one hand with all the philosophies of materialism and the philosophy of idealism and art with Christianity, on the other, which betrayed its own personal teaching, making an image for itself and comparing it with God, as well as the partialization of God or the totality into three categories of divinity (Bardhi, 2002, p. 85).

But they wanted to go further than the truth, replacing it with conjecture. They even tested God with evil. But can one go further than the truth? Can God be tested with evil? Can God be absent even for a moment, let alone be dead? Can something that is a whole in itself be divided, and can something irrational and infinite like God himself be imagined, even through the mediation of limited human instrumentality?

“After he took the morsel, Satan entered him. So Jesus said to him, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly.’ (John, 13, 27); “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”

“Say: ‘O People of the Scripture, do not exceed limits in your religion beyond the truth and do not follow the inclinations of a people who had gone astray

before and misled many and have strayed from the soundness of the way”.
(Qur’an, 5:77)

“O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And do not say, “Three”; desist – it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs.” (Qur’an, 4:171)

What is characteristic of all philosophies, sciences, arts and all other knowledge of the world is that they always begin with the affirmative thesis and relay on positive knowledge. In the face of all this, surprisingly, stands Islam as that middle path, (Qur’an, 2: 143).the path of life or the highest level that has made the synthesis between the contradictions in the world and has conceived them, it is founded on the truth, which begins with denial. In denial lies the deepest and highest knowledge of God as the all-encompassing One who stands in front of the entire visible and invisible world, and since the knowledge of Allah Almighty is not based on any positive experience, the conclusion necessarily follows that God can never be imagined, only the idea of Him can exist, as the Qur’an also instructs.

He can only be experienced individually. Only in religion the individual can reach the farthest and attain the highest value (Qur’an, 2: 255).

Therefore, only in religion does truth exist, and the movement towards religion must necessarily be occupied with truth, while in philosophy only assumption remains, which in its ultimate meaning can never be translated into truth. Hence in philosophy there is never truth, and everyone in the realm of philosophy can have their say and be right. Philosophy has not even limited itself absolutely (Brajčić, 1988, pp. 69-75).

In religion, the truth about the Absolute remains and is always established as an inconceivable and indivisible whole, while in philosophy, only the notion or some perceptions of it remain. Though Hegel, as the highest philosophical spirit born among European philosophers, tried to encompass all of human history with his thought and extend his thought to all levels of human thought and knowledge, he nonetheless accepted the wisdom that prevails in the world (What is real is wise, what is wise is real) and the universal or absolute spirit, which he tried to perceive and touch through paths that lead

nowhere. His religion was the religion of philosophers, which would rather think and conceive everything with reason, while his love is a love of deep thought, which permeates all spheres of the soul, but never reaches the highest, because between it and thought lies the insurmountable sphere of silence, which only religion understands, while other sciences before it are silent in the innocent wonder that stands before that paradox as a permanent goal and ardent desire, which wants to detach itself from itself and lose itself in that for which it has only the truth, but which it has not benefited from in its spiritual determination attached to human naturalness (Hegel, 1995, pp. 13-21).

“The only thought that philosophy brings with it is the simple thought of the mind, that the mind rules the world, or rather that even in world history the happening has been mental.

... So, from the very exploring of the world history it will follow that the happening in it has been mental, that it has been a mental, obligatory flow of that soul, of the soul whose nature is always one, but which in the world’s being explains it in its nature.

... In nothing that is to be scientific the mind dares not sleep, so it must use thinking. Whoever sees the world from the mental aspect, he also sees it mentally, the two being in mutual determination.” (Hegel, 1951, pp. 27-29).

In his detailed discussions on the Absolute, Hegel established three relations to it or three paths by which one reaches unto Him, the Absolute. These three paths or possibilities are at the same time the three highest manifestations of the spirit. Philosophy is the highest manifestation of the spirit, where the Absolute is reduced to a pure notion, then religion, which brings the prefiguration of that Absolute and finally art, as a high manifestation of the spirit of the third degree, where the problem of the Absolute is reduced to intuition.

However, in religion there could be an imagining of God if we speak exclusively of the Christian religion or of any other religion where God is presented in the world in some visible form, which is one hundred percent subject to the laws of the circle and the categories of space and time. However, when it comes to Islam, then we would not be able to agree with Hegel, because in Islam there is only the truth about God, what God is, but not the image that would reduce God to simple concretization and construction, from which the conclusion necessarily follows that the impossibility of seeing God through the limited apparatus of the eye turns any representation of Him into absurdity (Hafizović, 1996, pp. 29-44; al-Ashari, 2000, pp. 32-37 Brajičić, 1988, pp. 69-75).

In Hegel's philosophy, the Absolute was and remains only a notion about the essence of which nothing has been said. In fact, he established what the Revelation had established much earlier: that the Absolute exists. Simply, in his philosophy there is only the notion of the Absolute, which neither shows nor offers anything more, because from the notion, from the abstract, no existence arises or flows, as Kant said, which was strongly supported by Kierkegaard, who called this the only honest opinion about the existing.

What is important to mention here is that Hegel placed the Absolute in history and claimed that that absolute spirit is realized on three different planes, or three different categories, but at the same time the highest of the spirit: philosophy, religion and art. These are only three planes on which the absolute spirit is realized whether in type, intuition, prefiguration or pure notion as the highest abstract thought, which has almost no connection with reality or existence, as Kierkegaard says this in rebelling against Hegel's philosophy, that any existence that could be derived from that abstract thought would be only a partial representation of a general wisdom that rules the world, as Hegel states, while the individual himself in history is a prey to that wisdom, which is quite cunning, as well as a daily loser in it, who consciously or unconsciously enters and submits to the laws of that wisdom. Individual existence is impossible according to Hegel, or at least it does not represent a reality for itself, and any individual who closes himself within the circle of his own consciousness and assumes his own subjective values as general historical values, which that wisdom has created in the world, in history, is a state of the "beautiful soul", which deceives itself with subjective illusions and necessarily dissipates and disappears like smoke in the air. [For more, see: Brajičić, pp. 93-95].

This kind of thought caused reactions among existentialist philosophers, especially Kierkegaard, who speaks of the failure of that highly abstract thought that loses all connection with reality and any existence, and especially the theory of wisdom, which does not at all correspond to the existing order of things in nature. He rises against all those abstract generalities in which any subjective existence is lost, and even rebels against the institutional church, which assumes that generality, considering that God must be removed from the altar and placed in human hearts, to become the subjective God of all.

In his philosophizing, Hegel usurped the entire human history from certain peoples and did not allow them to participate in it, treating them only as fuel, which serves that history or that great historical machine that must

always plunder other peoples who have that history, such as: the Chinese, the ancient Egyptians, the Persians, the Indians and of course the Europeans. However, he certainly forgot the fact that history began with the first couple on Earth, when the gender was determined, only according to which history is possible. Humanity inherited from that couple everything that the first man had, while it was complete and in its very beginning represented both the individual and the entire human race.

“...The Easterners do not yet know that the soul or man as such is free in itself. Since they do not know this, they are not free. They know that only one is free, but precisely for that reason such freedom is a sinacote, savagery, the darkness of lust, or perhaps even its softness, which itself is only a natural case or sinacote. – Therefore that one is only a tyrant and not a free man. The Greeks were the first in whom the consciousness of freedom was awakened, and therefore they were free; but they, like the Romans, knew that only some are free, not man as such. Neither Plato nor Aristotle knew this. Therefore the Greeks had not only slaves, to whom the life and essence of their beautiful freedom was tied, but their freedom itself was partly only accidental, a transient and limited world, and partly at the same time also the harsh slavery of that human, humane one. – The Germanic nations were those which in Christianity reached the awareness that man as man is free, that the freedom of the soul constitutes his special nature.” (Hegel, 1951, p. 35).

In Christianity, man is not completely free, in fact he does not possess freedom for himself, especially when it comes to the Absolute. God is the highest freedom in religion, which is also claimed in philosophy, and since man contains in himself that pronounced divine element, he should necessarily turn directly to God and himself on the basis of his relative freedom given by God to benefit from divine love and pleasure. Man and God are in a direct relationship and there are no obstacles between them when it comes to turning to God and turning from Him. The very institution of the clergy in Christianity eliminated that possibility and deprived the broad masses of freedom in that area.

Today’s Western man is confronted every day with the machine that not only limited his freedom, but also eliminated and cast him out as God’s slave. On the other hand, the Eastern man at every step encounters only God, who is mentioned every day as the highest value, as the highest freedom according to which not only the Eastern man, but also the believer (*mu’min*) in general

is free and gains his freedom every day. The Western man reduces everything to *ratio* and is daily limited and hindered by the rigid geometry and relative human norms, which are established by European morality, while the Eastern man freely extends his thought into the boundless spaces of God's order, experiencing them deeply.

In Islam, man has been free since genesis and in his freedom he has created his own history, both that which is ranked in the plane of world history and that most true history, which does not go further than the space of spiritual being (Hafizović, 1996, 14-16; Neville (ed.), 2001, p. 140).

Islam truthfully presents the Absolute as the only and most prominent reality that stands before this world, and at the same time it permeates and emphasizes it with its omnipotence, but it never places it in the process of the happening nor refracts it through its own personal prisms of the soul, as happens in philosophy, to some extent in art and in Christianity.

The essence of the soul is freedom, which Hegel himself acknowledged. However, the soul is not and should not necessarily be free just because it has to move towards itself in order to reach its state of consciousness. If the soul had come into being with freedom itself before it had gained its consciousness, then it would have necessarily come into being through that movement of its own and would have necessarily lost its freedom. For everything that moves by coming into being does not have full awareness of itself nor does it have full freedom, because it is set in motion and process, and in that process different possibilities are formed. And everything that forms a possibility of any kind necessarily carries within itself the anxiety of the possibility of the appearance of two different states in which it can find itself. On the other hand, anxiety is a sign of the possibility of the loss of freedom. The Absolute can neither resemble nor have anxiety, because it has complete self-awareness, it is always in itself and in itself it is eternal and transcends every reality, which it penetrates with its knowledge to the point where the atom emerges (springs) from the formula of life [For more, see: Hafizović, 1996].

We mentioned already that in religion the soul that man carries within himself is a divine element by which man is free. In fact, through it man reaches freedom, while that soul itself promotes the realization of the purpose of man's extension in this world, where it necessarily flows. In religion man is free and by God and only by Him he reflects all the signs of the universal character, which then in themselves testify to the Absolute, which in itself is the

source of the entire universe. Hence, that which is free in itself, by itself and for itself, which has its own reason for existence in itself or which is reason in itself, is necessarily as such only One and Absolute, whether this is a pure notion in philosophy, an intuition in art or an vision of its kind in religion. This can only be God, by whom all possible states of freedom in every individual resemble and by whom all human history resembles the entire universe extended between the categories of space and time.

Through the very freedom of the soul which he tried to examine in the realm of philosophy, Hegel only to some extent reached the *n o t i o n* of the Absolute, although he did not express this concretely or formulated it clearly. This can be seen from the context in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, when he speaks of the soul, the essence or being of which is freedom. He does not seek any opposition outside itself in order to prove its freedom and consciousness, although opposition can and does exist outside it in the visible [For more, see: Hegel, 1962, p. 32].

“The nature of the soul can be known by its opposition. Just as weight is the substance of matter, so we must say that the substance, the essence of the soul, is freedom. It is believable to everyone that the soul, among other virtues, has freedom too; but philosophy teaches us that all the virtues of the soul exist only with freedom, that all virtues are only means to freedom, that all virtues only seek and produce freedom; this is the knowledge of speculative philosophy, that freedom is the only truth of the soul. Matter is heavy insofar as it aims towards a center: it is essentially composed, exists extended, it seeks its unity and aims to interrupt itself, it seeks its opposition. If it had reached this, then it would no longer be matter, but would be destroyed; it aims towards ideality, because in unity it is ideal. The soul, on the contrary, is that which must have the center in itself, it has no unity outside itself, but it has found it; it is in itself and at itself. Matter has its substance outside itself; the soul is that which is itself in itself. This is freedom, because if I am dependent, then I am in relation to something else, which I am not; I cannot be without the outside; I am free if I am in myself. This “being in itself” of the soul is self-consciousness.” (Hegel, 1962, p. 34).

Considering that we have not yet exhausted this issue to the end, nor do we intend to exhaust it, because this is ultimately impossible when talking about something that according to the Qur’an is designated as *gayb*. However, for

the human thought, although futile according to some, it is not a sin if a person ponders and thinks about this issue (Hafizović, 1996, p. 215).

Here lies precisely that very emphasized paradox, which stood in the face of all possible sciences, philosophies and arts, the paradox that only that Absolute, which is turned towards the whole world of the visible and the invisible as its source, which does not accept the logic of this world to which reason is accustomed, transcends the categories of space and time. This is what only religion understands as infinite possibility, which necessarily shapes by the infinite, because its source is in Revelation.

This is what is always and forever, the totality that does not tolerate any fragmentation and does not allow itself to be imagined by all the possible finitenesses of this world through different paths, which would open up the extraordinary possibility of pantheism and the undoubted warning of destruction, when everything would necessarily end in Nothingness. This is what is placed with its essence in front of this world and the entire realized positive experience of humanity, at the basis of which is the assumption of the affirmative nature, while the essence, meaning, affirmation and truth of which is best expressed in the negative acceptance of the undoubted truth established by Revelation.

The goal of this reflection was not to offer any profound thought, which in itself would contribute something new to the space of human knowledge, nor was it the intention to degrade anyone's thought or authority (especially Hegel's), or to present the entire misery, or even the splendor and breadth of any erudite wealth, but it was simply just a personal and verbal reflection, not out of the desire to retire from this harsh reality, but to enter it as deeply as possible and to know it intimately, out of the desire and true need to follow the Qur'anic imperatives on this issue and out of the need to find some solutions for oneself, in order to achieve personal ataraxy.

Here I tried only to initiate certain thoughts, to develop interest in others, and this again not from the desire to plunge into the very deep and secret depths of thought, but from the interest in the truth in front which man stops, or from the fear of it, because of our ignorance or immaturity to attain it. This was only an attempt to search for the truth or find the truth for those who drown in a way invisible to the human eye. It is the search for the truth for those who I consider to be mine enough, so I could communicate it to them.

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ORIENTALISM, ISLAM AND THE ALBANIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

Adnan Ismaili

Abstract

This article examines the intertwined histories of Orientalism and Islam with particular attention to the Albanian intellectual tradition. Drawing on Edward Said's foundational critique of Orientalist discourse, the study traces four major phases in the Christian and European engagement with Islam: early Eastern Christian polemics, medieval Catholic-directed scholarship, colonial-era orientalist production, and the more self-critical scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Within each phase, the paper identifies the specific ways in which Albanian Christian clergy, Ottoman-era Muslim writers, and post-Enlightenment Albanian intellectuals positioned themselves relative to the broader Orientalist field. The analysis reveals that Albanian engagements with the "Orient" were never simply derivative of European paradigms: they were simultaneously shaped by confessional loyalties, Ottoman imperial belonging, nationalist aspirations, and Sufi spiritual frameworks. By recovering the voices of Albanian scholars—from Pjetër Budi and Pjetër Bogdani to Naim Frashëri and the founders of the Oriental Studies chair in Prishtina—the article contributes to ongoing efforts to decolonize the historiography of Islamic studies and to foreground peripheral yet significant intellectual traditions.

Keywords: *Orientalism; Islam; Albanian intellectual history; colonialism; Ottoman literature; Sufism*

1. Introduction

Orientalism—as a corpus of scholarly practice, cultural imagination, and ideological apparatus—has long occupied a contested place within the humanities and social sciences. Since Edward Said's landmark 1978 intervention, scholars

have been compelled to inquire not only the content of Orientalist knowledge but also the structural conditions that made such knowledge possible and, crucially, desirable to those who produced it. Said's central thesis—that the “Orient” was, in large measure, a European invention, a site of romantic projection, frozen otherness, and imperial legibility—has reshaped entire disciplines while simultaneously provoking sustained critique from scholars who find it overextended, reductive, or insufficiently attentive to internal diversity within both Orientalism and the societies it purported to describe (Said, 1978, p. 23).

Yet the debate over Orientalism has, by and large, been conducted within the intellectual frameworks of Western Europe and the Arab world. Smaller or peripheral traditions—including those of the Albanian-speaking world—have received comparatively little attention in this broader conversation, despite the fact that they offer singularly complex vantage points. Albanians occupied a unique historical position: a predominantly Muslim majority emerging from Ottoman rule, a Christian minority with deep ties to Rome and Constantinople, and a nationalist intelligentsia that sought to construct a secular, European-facing identity while drawing selectively on both Eastern and Western cultural resources.

This article addresses that lacuna by situating the Albanian encounter with Orientalism within a comparative framework. It pursues two principal aims: first, to reconstruct the four major phases through which Christian and European scholarship approached Islam, paying particular attention to the methodological and ideological transformations that distinguish each period; and second, to trace how Albanian intellectuals—clergy, Sufi poets, secular nationalists, and academic orientalists—inhabited, reproduced, subverted, or transcended these frameworks across several centuries. In doing so, the study argues that the Albanian case is not merely an appendage to an European story but a distinctive node in a genuinely transnational intellectual history.

2. Conceptualizing Orientalism: Definitions, Debates and Periodizations

The term “Orientalism” carries multiple semantic layers that must be distinguished before a meaningful analysis can proceed. In the most neutral academic usage, it denotes the scholarly study of Eastern languages, cultures, and civilizations—a sense preserved in university department names and reflected

in the German *Orientalistik* and the French *études orientales*. In its more charged, post-Saidian usage, however, “Orientalism” designates a discourse in which the asymmetry of power between Europe and the East is reproduced, naturalized, and disguised as objective scholarship (Said, 1978, p. 23). It is in this second sense that the concept carries critical force, pointing to the ways in which scholarly institutions—journals, chairs, learned societies, encyclopaedias—functioned simultaneously as instruments of colonial governance and as producers of a specifically European self-image.

The earliest challenge to the self-presentation of Orientalism as disinterested science came from Anouar Abdel Malek’s 1963 article “L’orientalisme en crise,” which argued that classical Orientalist scholarship systematically froze and essentialized its objects of study, denying Eastern peoples historical agency and internal dynamism (Abdel Malek, 1963, pp. 109–142). Francesco Gabrieli’s rebuttal, “Apologie de l’orientalisme,” offered a vigorous defence of the European tradition while acknowledging some of its limitations (Gabrieli, 1965, pp. 134–142). This polemical exchange established the terms of the debate that Said would synthesize and amplify fifteen years later.

Within Muslim scholarly circles, the response to Orientalism has been equally divided. Some contemporary Muslim scholars trained in Western academies have acknowledged the genuine philological and historical achievements of the Orientalist tradition; others have viewed its output with deep suspicion, seeing in it an instrument of ideological subjugation (Smajlović, n.d., pp. 119–153; es-Sibai, 2003, pp. 5–10). This internal debate within Islamic scholarship is itself an evidence of the complex reception history of Orientalism—a history that cannot be reduced to a simple binary of Western domination and Eastern resistance.

For the purposes of this article, the history of Christian and European scholarship on Islam is periodized into four analytically distinct phases:

- (1) early contact between Muslims and Eastern Christians;
- (2) medieval Catholic-directed polemic and translation;
- (3) colonial-era academic Orientalism; and
- (4) the self-critical, pluralist scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Each phase produced distinctive institutional forms, rhetorical strategies, and—crucially—distinct positions on the nature of Muhammad and the validity of Islamic revelation.

3. Four Phases of Christian and European Engagement with Islam

3.1 Early Eastern Christian Encounters

The earliest recorded Christian engagement with Islam emerged within decades of the Muslim conquests of Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia (633–659 CE)—regions characterized by sophisticated Greek- and Syriac-speaking Christian communities. The intellectual climate of these communities was marked by ongoing doctrinal disputes, and Islam entered their horizon not as a neutral phenomenon requiring dispassionate analysis but as a theological problem demanding an apologetic response.

John of Damascus (c. 655–749), revered as a Doctor of the Universal Church, produced the most influential early Christian treatment of Islam. In his *Fount of Knowledge* and *De Haeresibus*, he characterized Islam as a heresy rather than a new religion, depicted the Prophet Muhammad as a false prophet who had absorbed elements of both the Old and New Testaments through contact with an Arian monk named Bahira, and dismissed Muslim devotion as idolatry directed towards the planet Venus, which Arabs allegedly called Hubar (Silajdžić, 2015, pp. 40–46). These accusations—fabrication, heresy, carnal excess—would prove extraordinarily durable, providing the paradigm through which subsequent Western writers interpreted Islam for centuries.

Jacobite and Nestorian authors also engaged with Islam in this period. The bishop of Takrit, Habib ibn Hidma (known as Abu Raita), produced apologetic treatises defending Christian doctrine before a Muslim audience; similarly, the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I entered into a theological dialogue with Caliph al-Mahdi, presenting Christian fundamentals alongside their Islamic analogues (Cheikho, 1923, pp. 1–26). Byzantine polemicists—Bartolomew of Edessa, Nicetas of Byzantium, and Manuel II Palaeologus—continued this tradition through the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, consistently portraying Muhammad as a demonically inspired impostor and Islam as a distortion of biblical revelation (Marković, 1995, pp. 13–55).

Significantly, no Albanian-origin author from this early period has been identified as engaging systematically with Islam or Muhammad. The mental frameworks elaborated during these centuries would, however, inform subsequent Albanian Christian writing once the Ottoman state arrived on Albanian soil.

3.2 Medieval Catholic Scholarship: Translation, Polemic, and Crusade

Between tenth to fifteenth centuries, the Western Latin encounter with Islam assumed new institutional forms, shaped by the specific dynamics of the Crusading movement, the Reconquista, and the translation movement centred in Toledo and Palermo. Robert Caspar identifies three distinct currents within this period (Caspar, 1987, pp. 76–77).

The first was a movement of genuine cultural exchange, through which the scientific and philosophical inheritance of the Islamic world—medicine, mathematics, astronomy, Aristotelian philosophy—was transmitted into Latin through the collaborative work of translators in Toledo, Burgos, Naples, and Sicily. This *translatio studiorum* fundamentally transformed European intellectual life, stimulating the scholastic florescence of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Sezgin, 2010). The magnitude of this debt to Islamic science has been systematically reconstructed by the contemporary historian of science Fuat Sezgin, whose multi-volume study has demonstrated the depth of Islamic contributions to world civilization far beyond the parameters acknowledged in standard Eurocentric historiographies.

The second current was the production of popular legend and theological caricature, driven by the ideological demands of the Crusading enterprise. Absurd myths about Muhammad proliferated in clerical writing; Peter the Venerable of Cluny commissioned the first Latin translation of the Quran in 1143 precisely so that it could be refuted (Nawwab, 2002, p. 124). The translation, produced by Robert of Ketton, was widely acknowledged to deviate significantly from the original and yet served as the basis for further European translations for five centuries. Raymond Lull's thirteenth-century project of training missionaries in Arabic and Islamic theology similarly subordinated linguistic and cultural knowledge to the aim of confuting Islamic claims (Nawwab, 2002, pp. 124–125).

The third current, more seldomly acknowledged, was a strand of apologetic and irenic engagement that recognized the need to understand Islam on its own terms as a precondition for meaningful dialogue. It is this minority tradition—exemplified by figures such as John of Segovia in the fifteenth century—that anticipates the more generous scholarly orientations of later centuries.

Albanian Christian writing of the early modern period largely reproduced the polemical framework of the Latin West, though inflected by the specific

political context of Ottoman rule. Pjetër Budi (1566–1622), born in the region of Mat and author of four devotional works in Albanian, consistently depicted Ottoman power and Islamic teaching in negative terms, situating Albanian suffering within a providentialist narrative of Christian martyrdom (Elsie, 2001, pp. 41–47). Frang Bardhi (1606–1643), author of the *Dictionarium Latino Epiroticum* (1635) and a prolific correspondent of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, furnished Rome with detailed intelligence on diocesan conditions, political developments, and Albanian customs—a form of ecclesiastical Orientalism shaped by missionary imperatives (Elsie, 2001, p. 49).

The most significant Albanian Catholic intellectual of the period, Pjetër Bogdani (1630–1689), author of *Çeta e profetëve* (*The Band of Prophets*), developed his anti-Islamic argument in direct engagement with the broader Jesuit and Dominican tradition of learned polemic. His encounter with Cardinal Gregorio Barbarigo (1622–1697) in Padua—a bishop who had established a multilingual press for Eastern Christian purposes and maintained scholarly interest in Oriental cultures, including Albanian—illustrates the complex intersection of missionary enterprise, humanist philology, and political calculation that characterized Catholic Orientalism in this period. After returning to the Balkans in 1686, Bogdani lent his organizational capacities to the military resistance against the Ottoman Empire in Kosovo, perishing in the epidemic that followed the Habsburg withdrawal (Elsie, 2001, pp. 52–61).

Simultaneously, and in stark contrast, Albanian Muslims from the same period were producing literary output in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Persian—languages that positioned them not as observers of an alien civilization but as active participants within it. Figures such as Mevlana Atai of Skopje, Jahja Bej Dukagjini (d. 1575), known in Turkish as Dukaginzade Yahya Bey, and numerous others composed verse in the classical mesnevi form, celebrating Islamic values and—in Jahja Bey's masterpiece *Shah-u geda* (*The King and the Beggar*)—exploring the Sufi metaphysics of divine love through allegory. This literary corpus constitutes a distinctively Albanian contribution to the broader Ottoman Islamic cultural tradition and stands as a powerful corrective to narratives that treat all Albanian engagement with Islam as purely passive or externally imposed (Izeti, 2004, p. 206).

3.3 Colonial-Era Orientalism: Knowledge, Power, and the Institutionalization of the Field

The consolidation of academic Orientalism as an institutional field occurred in tandem with the expansion of European colonial power, particularly during the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries. The establishment of Oriental Studies chairs—first in France, then in England and the German states—reflected the practical needs of colonial administration (commercial negotiation, legal translation, intelligence gathering) as well as more diffuse cultural interests in the “exotic” East. The symbiosis between Orientalist scholarship and colonial power reached its most visible expression in Napoleon’s Egyptian expedition (1798–1801), which deployed an accompanying commission of scientists and scholars as part of a project of comprehensive territorial and epistemic appropriation.

Said’s analysis of this period remains the most influential account of how Orientalist knowledge functioned as a technology of power—filtering the East through a grid of European categories, representing it as static, irrational, and governable, and thereby producing the legitimating conditions for colonial domination (Said, 1978). While subsequent scholars have qualified this account—pointing to the genuine achievements of philological Orientalism, the diversity of orientalist motivations, and the ways in which Eastern scholars actively participated in the production of “Oriental” knowledge on their own terms—the basic insight that knowledge and power were structurally intertwined in this period retains considerable analytical force.

Among the genuine scholarly contributions of this era must be counted the editing and publication of major Islamic source texts: Carl Tornberg’s edition of Ibn Athir’s *al-Kamil fi’l-Tarikh*, *Eduard Sachau’s edition of Ibn Sa’d’s Tabaqat*, and the multi-volume *History of al-Tabari* all represent enduring contributions to Islamic historiography, however problematic the broader institutional context in which they were produced.

In the Albanian literary sphere, this period corresponds to the remarkable flourishing of the Bejtexhinj tradition—Albanian poetry written in the Arabic script and saturated with Islamic themes. Figures such as Nezim Frakulla, Muhamed Çami Kyçyku, Muçi Zade, Ali Ulqinaku, Mulla Hysein Dobraqi, Tahir Gjakova, and Shejh Mala produced a body of verse that simultaneously engaged with Islamic devotional and mystical conventions and addressed the social realities of Albanian-speaking communities (Izeti, 2004, p. 208). This

tradition culminated, in a complex and philosophically sophisticated way, in the work of Naim Frashëri (1846–1900), whose literary output drew on Bek-tashi Sufi philosophy to construct a vision of Albanian national identity that was at once Islamic and universalist, Eastern and European.

3.4 Critical and Pluralist Orientalism: Towards a Post-Colonial Islamic Studies

The mid-twentieth century witnessed a significant reorientation within Western academic approaches to Islam, driven partly by the delegitimization of colonialism, partly by the impact of Said's critique, and partly by the emergence of scholars who combined rigorous philological training with genuine openness to Islamic intellectual traditions on their own terms. Figures such as Louis Massignon, Georges Anawati, Montgomery Watt, Henri Corbin, Annemarie Schimmel, Marshall G. S. Hodgson, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and Martin Lings approached Islamic civilization with a combination of scholarly rigour and sympathetic imagination that represented a decisive break from the dismissive or polemical registers of earlier Orientalism.

Albert Hourani's observation in 1992 that Said's *Orientalism* had rendered the neutral use of the term virtually impossible captures the seismic effect of that text on the self-understanding of the discipline (Said, 1978). The consequence was not the disappearance of Oriental Studies but its reconstitution under new names—Islamic studies, Middle Eastern studies, Near Eastern studies—and, crucially, with a heightened reflexivity about the political and epistemological assumptions underlying scholarly practice.

4. Albanian Orientalism in the Modern Period

The institutionalization of Oriental Studies in Albanian-speaking territories began in earnest in the second half of the twentieth century. The foundational moment was the establishment of the Chair of Oriental Studies at the University of Prishtina in 1973 by Dr. Hasan Kaleshi (1922–1976), a scholar of exceptional range who was trained in both Eastern and Western academic traditions. Kaleshi's contribution—which included the cataloguing of Ottoman-era manuscripts in Yugoslav archives and the pioneering study of Albanian contributions to Ottoman literature—established the disciplinary infrastructure for subsequent generations of scholars.

Prior to institutionalization, individual scholars had made significant contributions to the elucidation of Islamic and Oriental questions in Albanian.

Hafiz Ali Korça, Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, Ferid Vokopola, Sadik Bega, Sherif Putra, Vexhi Buharaja, and Osman Myderrizi each produced work that, while varying in quality and methodological sophistication, collectively demonstrated that the Albanian intellectual tradition contained the resources for a self-directed engagement with Islamic learning.

Enis Sulstarova's analysis of Albanian Orientalism in the post-Naim period identifies a distinctive pattern: the selective appropriation of an Oriental heritage in the service of a nationalist narrative that simultaneously claimed European belonging (Sulstarova, as cited in the original paper). This double movement—acknowledging the Ottoman Islamic past while distancing the Albanian nation from it through a narrative of forced conversion and essential European-ness—represents a specific form of what Said would call the "Orientalizing of the Orient": the internalization of an external gaze that renders one's own history legible only through borrowed categories.

The establishment of the Oriental Philology program at the University of Tetova in 2012 marks the most recent chapter in this institutional history. The program's second-cycle offerings, which include original research on significant Oriental manuscripts and the translation of key texts into Albanian, represent an ongoing effort to mediate between the Albanian public and a cultural inheritance that remains, for many, inaccessible in its original languages.

5. Conclusion

The history of Orientalism and its Albanian reception offers a series of instructive complications to any simple narrative about the relationship between knowledge and power in the study of Islam. Albanian intellectuals were neither passive recipients of European Orientalist categories nor entirely immune to their shaping influence. They produced scholarship, poetry, theology, and institutional infrastructure that reflected the distinctive pressures of their historical situation: Catholic missionary culture, Ottoman imperial belonging, Sufi spiritual formation, and nationalist ideology all left their marks on how Albanians read, wrote about, and lived within the Islamic tradition.

At the same time, the Albanian case confirms the broader argument that Orientalism was never a monolithic or uniformly hegemonic discourse. It was contested from within European scholarship (Abdel Malek, Massignon, Schimmel) and from without (Said, Smajlović). Its institutional expressions—

translation projects, academic chairs, manuscript catalogues—were susceptible to appropriation by subaltern scholars who turned its tools toward ends their European founders had not envisioned. The ongoing project of Albanian Oriental Studies, from Kaleshi to the present, is a testament to this possibility.

Future research might profitably examine the specific manuscript traditions preserved in Albanian archives, the reception of Sufi literature in contemporary Albanian religious life, and the comparative position of Albanian Orientalism within the broader context of post-Yugoslav and post-Ottoman intellectual history. Such inquiries would not only enrich the historiography of Islamic studies but contribute to the decolonization of a scholarly field that still bears the marks of its foundational entanglements.

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ADMINISTRATION AND DENATIONALIZATION OF WAQF PROPERTY OF THE ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA: HISTORICAL ROLE, LEGAL FRAMEWORK, AND THE CHALLENGES OF PROPERTY RESTITUTION

Muhammed Izeti

Abstract

This academic paper examines the institution of waqf (Islamic endowment) in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM), addressing three interconnected dimensions: the historical and social role of waqfs during the Ottoman period; the administration and legal transformations of waqf property across successive political regimes; and the process of denationalization of waqf properties belonging to the Islamic Religious Community (IRC). The waqf, as an instrument of Islamic law, served as the primary pillar of cultural, educational, humanitarian, and economic development in this territory from the fourteenth until the twentieth century, when communist regimes applied systematic nationalization and mass confiscation of religious properties. The paper draws on original *waqfiyyas* (endowment deeds), archival documents, court decisions, and the positive legislation of the RNM, critically evaluating the legal deficiencies and inequalities embedded in the Law on Denationalization of 1998. Employing historical, juridico-normative, analytical, and statistical methods, the paper demonstrates that the denationalization process has been protracted, inconsistent, and frequently discriminatory against the IRC, leaving a sig-

nificant number of waqf properties outside effective legal protection. The conclusions and recommendations aim to contribute to reforming the legal framework and ensuring the full restoration of the IRC's property rights in the RNM.

Keywords: *Waqf, Denationalization, Islamic Religious Community, Republic of North Macedonia, Islamic law, Waqf administration, Waqfiyya, Property confiscation, Legislation.*

Intrudiction

The institution of waqf constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of Islamic civilization and has served as the primary mechanism of social solidarity, educational financing, and cultural heritage preservation across Islamic empires. In the territory of the present-day Republic of North Macedonia, the first waqfs were established with the Ottoman conquest in the fourteenth century and developed over five centuries into a sophisticated institutional system. Mosques, madrasas, tekkes, libraries, imarets, and the urban infrastructure of major cities such as Skopje, Tetovo, Bitola, and Ohrid were built and maintained through waqf endowments.

The twentieth century brought dramatic changes to the waqf institution in these territories. The Yugoslav communist regime treated waqf property as an obstacle to ideological centralization of the state, applying, through agrarian reforms and nationalization laws, the mass confiscation of IRC assets without compensation. With the collapse of communism and the declaration of Macedonian independence, the legal process of denationalization began — the restitution of property unjustly confiscated from institutions and individuals. However, this process was not free of serious shortcomings. The Law on Denationalization adopted in 1998, as amended in 2000 and 2003, was applied with double standards toward Islamic religious institutions, resulting in the exclusion of a large number of waqf properties from the restitution process.

The case of Harabati Baba Tekke, the properties of the Tetovo Mufti's Office, and numerous other waqf sites remain unresolved to this day, as reflected in contradictory court and administrative decisions.

This paper analyzes the condition of waqfs in the RNM through a multi-disciplinary approach — historical, legal, and social — relying on primary

sources including Ottoman *waqfiyyas*, archival documents from the State Archive of North Macedonia (ДАРМ), court and administrative decisions, and positive legal sources. The paper is organized into three main sections:

- (1) the historical and social role of waqfs during the Ottoman period;
- (2) the administration and legal transformations of waqfs across successive political regimes; and
- (3) the denationalization process of IRC waqfs, with a particular focus on the Tetovo region.

1. The historical and Social Role of Waqfs in the Territory of the Republic of North Macedonia

1.1 *The Waqf as an Institution of Islamic Civilization*

The term *waqf* — from the Arabic root meaning ‘to halt, to stop, to deprive’ — denotes the perpetual endowment of property by its owner for religious, charitable, or public benefit purposes. According to the *Islamic Religious Encyclopedia* of the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (DIA, 1986, vol. 42, p. 475), the waqf is ‘a charitable organization established through a legal process, consisting in the permanent donation of property for the fulfillment of religious and social purposes.’ This concept grants the waqf the status of a sui generis legal entity in Islamic law: endowed property becomes the property of God (*habs*), while its management is entrusted to persons and institutions appointed for that purpose.

Waqfs can be classified according to several criteria. By the nature of ownership, they are divided into original waqfs (land, movable and immovable property) and irsadi waqfs (revenues from state-owned land designated for public services). By purpose and beneficiary, they are distinguished as charitable waqfs, zurrî waqfs (family/hereditary endowments), and public interest waqfs (imarets, hospitals, libraries, bridges). By income generation, waqfs are divided into those producing direct benefits (mosques, schools, fountains) and indirect ones (shops, inns, mills, vineyards), whose revenues finance the main waqf institutions (Çizakça, 2000, p. 24).

1.2 *Waqfs as the Foundation of Educational and Cultural Development*

Waqfs served as the primary support of Islamic educational infrastructure — *mektebs* (primary schools), *madradas* (secondary and higher schools),

libraries, and *zawiyas* — throughout the territory of the present-day RNM. Historian Naser Ramadani notes that, according to the Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi, the number of madrasas in Macedonia in 1660 had reached twenty-four, while by the nineteenth century that figure exceeded forty-five (Ramadani, 1998, p. 82). The *waqfiyya* of Kukli Beg, authenticated in 1538, clearly attests that the endower had built two mosques functioning simultaneously as schools, providing students with clothing and food through waqf funds (Kaleši, 1972, p. 302).

The urban development of the RNM's principal cities is closely linked to waqfs. Skopje acquired its urban character through the waqfs of Yigit Pasha (14th century), Isa Bey, and Mustafa Pasha (15th–16th centuries), while Tetovo was distinguished by the waqfs of Sinan Çelebi and Koca Recep Pasha. According to records provided by the Waqf Directorate of Skopje in 1936, the Isa Bey Mosque was built in 884 AH, and that of Mustafa Pasha in 890 AH, financed by waqfs encompassing thirteen entire villages (ДАРМ, f. 613.23.91-96/378-414). The waqf was not merely a religious institution — it was the primary generator of the social, economic, and cultural organization of the Muslim community throughout the Ottoman period.

The economic power of waqfs should not be underestimated. According to Öztürk (2004, p. 41), waqfs controlled approximately 15–26% of the Ottoman economy between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The imaret (public kitchen) of Harabati Baba Tekke in Tetovo was obliged, according to its original *waqfiyya*, to provide three daily meals to at least sixty poor persons and travelers (Barkan, 1963, p. 299). This demonstrates that waqfs fulfilled the clear function of a welfare state, covering needs that are today the responsibility of the public administration.

2. Administration of waqfs and legal transformations across political regimes

2.1 *Waqf Administration in the Ottoman Period*

The *waqfiyya* (notarial deed of endowment) was the fundamental legal document of every waqf. It set out in detail the purpose of the endowment, the list of properties, the appointment of the administrator (*mütevelli*), the salaries of staff, and the specific conditions imposed by the endower. The *waqfi-*

yyas examined reveal sophisticated legal instruments: the *waqfiyya* of Yahya Pasha, preserved in the Archive of the General Directorate of Waqfs (VGMA, 629/332), prescribes in detail the salaries of tomb custodians, conditions for Quranic recitation, and the distribution of revenues to descendants (VGMA, 629/332, pp. 421-422).

The *mütevelli* held a central role in waqf administration — he was bound to implement the conditions of the *waqfiyya*, manage properties, and report before the Islamic court (*qadi*). The Ottoman state control over waqfs was reinforced through the Ministry of Waqfs (Evkaf Nezareti), established in the nineteenth century. This institutional system guaranteed the continuity and functioning of waqfs as a source of public services, preventing misappropriation of endowment funds (Özcan, 2005, pp. 513-552).

2.2 Waqfs under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Communist Regime

With the Ottoman withdrawal and the integration of Macedonian territories into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (1918), waqfs entered a period of serious legal uncertainty. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia imposed the first significant restrictions on Islamic waqfs — the Agrarian Reform Law of 1921 led to the expropriation of numerous waqf lands, while the Waqf Directorate in Skopje was subjected to continuous administrative pressure. Archival documents from ДАРМ reveal government initiatives to dispose of waqfs as ‘surplus property’ (ДАРМ, 6.1.34.43/820-822). The situation culminated in the dissolution of the Waqf-Educational Council (Vakufsko-Mearifski Sabor) of Skopje in May 1940, when the Ministry of Justice appointed a state commissioner (AJ, Fund 63, fasc. 135).

The communist period of Socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1991) delivered the fatal blow to the waqf system. The Agrarian Reform of 1945 and the nationalization laws of 1947–1958 confiscated the majority of waqf properties without any compensation. The ideological purpose was explicit: the Minister of Agriculture, Vasa Čubrilović, openly stated that the economic weakening of religious communities was a necessary precondition for socialist unification of the state (Radić, 2002, p. 179). The IRC was left legally diminished, with restricted property and financial competences, while its waqfs were transferred to communal enterprises, schools, and state institutions.

2.3 Waqfs after Independence — The Legal Framework of the RNM

With the declaration of Macedonian independence (1991), the IRC immediately began formal requests for the restitution of confiscated properties. The IRC Presidency submitted its first official letter to the Government in May 1991 (no. 509, dated 22.05.1991), demanding the restoration of waqf properties to their pre-confiscation status. The adoption of the Law on Denationalization (Official Gazette of the RNM, year LIV, no. 20, 29.04.1998) opened the legal avenue for property restitution, although the legal framework presented serious interpretative problems.

The 1998 Law provides for the restitution of properties expropriated after August 2, 1944 (Article 2), recognizing religious communities as entitled subjects. However, concrete application has shown that legal norms have been applied selectively against the IRC: numerous waqf properties have been rejected on grounds of changed land use or inaccurate cadastral registration, resulting in the continuation of de facto occupation even after the law's adoption (Shasivari, 2011). The fundamental deficiency of the law lies in the absence of effective alternative compensation mechanisms and binding administrative deadlines.

3. Denationalization of IRC Waqfs in the RNM- with Particular Focus the Tetovo Region

3.1 The Denationalization Process: Achievements and Obstacles

The denationalization process of IRC waqfs in the RNM has followed a dual trajectory: on one hand, there are positively resolved cases in which property has been returned to the IRC — including certain mosques and land in Skopje and Tetovo; on the other hand, a considerable number of cases remain unresolved or has been concluded negatively for the IRC. The Skopje Mufti's Office submitted the first formal denationalization request under reference no. 19-08-715/1 (38) on 07.09.2000, followed by requests from the Shtip Mufti's Office (no. 19-385/07-2, dated 20.11.2007) and again from the Skopje Mufti's Office (no. 19-08-580/1 (554), dated 14.05.2002), clearly documenting the breadth of the problem.

The assessment of the Director of Waqfs of the IRC, Mr. Driton Dikena, highlights that judicial and administrative practice has demonstrated dou-

ble standards in the treatment of IRC denationalization cases compared to other legal subjects. Particularly problematic are cases where waqf property has been built upon or physically altered in the interim, which complicates the restitution process and frequently serves as grounds for rejection (Dikena, internal assessment). This legal approach has generated serious criticism from civil society and the Macedonian legal academy.

3.2 Specific Cases: Harabati Baba Tekke and Tetovo Waqf Properties

Harabati Baba Tekke of Tetovo, founded in the sixteenth century, represents one of the most sensitive and politically charged cases of waqf denationalization in the RNM. This site of extraordinary historical, cultural, and spiritual significance has been the subject of conflict between the IRC and the Bektashi Community. The property title of the tekke belongs legally to the IRC according to the original *waqfiyya*, but it was confiscated during the communist period. The denationalization of the tekke has been complicated by competing claims and divergent legal interpretations by the competent state bodies of the RNM (Bislimi, 2007, pp. 96-97).

Similarly, the Tetovo Mufti's Office has submitted multiple requests for the denationalization of various properties: land near the cemetery (cadastral parcel 3530, cadastral commune Tetovo-1), the Correctional House, and building land near the music school (parcel 1645, cadastral commune Tetovo-1). The IRC's internal register for Tetovo and its surrounding villages documents the actual number of properties historically belonging to waqf funds but not yet returned. The Mufti of Tetovo, Prof. Dr. Qani Nesimi, has publicly emphasized that delays in the denationalization process directly damage the IRC's capacity to provide religious and educational services (Nesimi, interview 2015).

3.3 Critical Assessment of the Legal Framework and Recommendations

Analysis of the denationalization process reveals several structural deficiencies in the legislation: (1) the 1998 Law contains no specific provisions for waqfs as a distinct category of property with the particular characteristics of Islamic law; (2) procedural deadlines are insufficient and impose no sanctions on administrative bodies that delay proceedings; (3) the criterion of 'new construction' on waqf properties is frequently invoked as grounds for rejection, without offering the IRC an equivalent alternative compensation;

(4) there is a lack of full transparency in the cadastral database and periodic reporting by competent bodies to religious communities.

Professor Jeton Shasivari has correctly argued that a restrictive interpretation of the law produces *de facto* discrimination against the IRC, by failing to treat the waqf as a category of property with constitutionally guaranteed status (Shasivari, 2011). This approach is incompatible with Article 19 of the Constitution of the RNM, which guarantees religious freedom and the right of religious communities to own property, and with the Ohrid Framework Agreement amendments (2001) on the equality of communities. The full and just denationalization of Islamic waqfs is not merely a matter of property rights — it is a question of historical justice and constitutional respect for the Muslim community in the RNM.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the institution of waqf in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia through a historical, legal, and social analysis, covering the period from the Ottoman foundations of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to the contemporary challenges of denationalization. The waqf has demonstrated rare institutional resilience: it has survived five centuries of Ottoman rule, two world wars, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and communism — and today it faces the difficult process of legal restoration.

Several conclusions emerge clearly from the analysis. First, waqfs played an uncontested and fundamental role in the educational, cultural, humanitarian, and economic development of the present-day RNM during the Ottoman period, providing public services that are today considered functions of the welfare state. Second, the Yugoslav periods — especially the communist one — marked the most destructive process in the history of waqf in the RNM, confiscating properties and dismantling institutions without any legal compensation. Third, the denationalization process since 1991 has been incomplete, inconsistent, and frequently discriminatory toward the IRC.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are presented:

(1) Amendment of the Law on Denationalization to include waqfs as a distinct category of property, with additional procedural guarantees;

- (2) Establishment of a Special Inter-institutional Commission, composed of representatives of the IRC, the Ministry of Justice, and the Cadastral Agency, for the systematic inventory and resolution of waqf property cases;
- (3) Application of an alternative compensation mechanism — equivalent land or financial compensation — when physical restitution is not feasible;
- (4) Enhanced transparency through periodic public reporting on the status of active denationalization proceedings concerning religious properties. The implementation of these recommendations would contribute to the restoration of historical justice and the strengthening of the rule of law in the Republic of North Macedonia.

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BOOK REVIEW

MICHEL FOUCAULT: POWER, KNOWLEDGE, THE INDIVIDUAL

By Prof. Dr. Kushtrim Ahmeti, *Michel Foucault – Power, Knowledge, the Individual*, Logos-A, Skopje 2025

Metin Izeti

The publication of Prof. Dr. Kushtrim Ahmeti's book, *Michel Foucault – Power, Knowledge, the Individual* (Logos-A, Skopje 2025) apart from being an addition to the Albanian academic library; it is also an intellectual event marking a turning point in the treatment of critical philosophy in Albanian language. In an era where our social and political world is shifting with unprecedented velocity, and where questions of freedom, control, and identity become increasingly urgent, this book emerges as an indispensable guide. Ahmeti does not offer a dry compilation of Foucault's ideas, but rather a vibrant and engaged hermeneutics, transforming the text into a "toolbox"—precisely as the French philosopher intended—by which the reader can dismantle the visible and invisible mechanisms of reality.

Ahmeti begins his study by placing Foucault not upon a distant pedestal of theory, but in a dynamic dialogue with the Western philosophical tradition. He treats him as an "archaeologist and genealogist of the human mind," emphasizing that the Foucauldian project was not merely historiographical, but diagnostic. Here, the author displays an expansive mastery of the history of ideas, illustrating how Foucault draws from Nietzsche the concept of genealogy as a history of power, the question "What is Enlightenment?" from Kant, and a sensitivity towards power relations from Marx – yet transmutes these inspirations into something entirely unique. This meticulous contextualization is essential, for it reveals that Foucault's philosophy was born as

a response to the fundamental crises of modernity: the crisis of the subject, truth, and freedom.

The philosophical depth of this treatment is clearly evidenced in Ahmeti's interpretation of the "archaeology of knowledge." He explains that this is not a search for lost facts, but an investigation into the *conditions of possibility* that, in a given epoch, allow something to be articulated as truth. Thus, history is no longer seen as a linear progression toward perfection, but as a series of discontinuities, ruptures, and discursive struggles. This perspective liberates history from teleological myths, allowing us to perceive it as a field of conflict where knowledge and truth are perpetually the objects and prey of power.

Perhaps the most potent aspect of Ahmeti's book—and one of Foucault's most revolutionary pillars—is the treatment of the power-knowledge symbiosis (*pouvoir-savoir*). The author masterfully avoids reducing this concept to the simple adage: "knowledge is power." Instead, he deepens the argument by showing that this relationship is not external or merely repressive, but productive and constituent. Power does not silence knowledge; it creates, channels, and distributes it. Simultaneously, knowledge always generates effects of power.

Ahmeti illustrates this through medicine, psychiatry, and penal sciences, demonstrating how the invention of the "healthy person," "mental health," and "the law" was not simply progress, but creation of new categories of control and exclusion.

This is not a power that forbids, but a power that administers life (**bio-power**)—one that regulates, measures, classifies, and ultimately produces a specific kind of human: the disciplined and normalized individual. Here, Ahmeti's study becomes particularly vital for the Albanian reader, providing him a lens to analyze our own institutional educational, health, and justice, prompting us to ask: what knowledge is being produced here, and what kind of subjects are we creating as a society?

The chapter on Jeremy Bentham's **Panopticon**—a metaphor rendered famous by Foucault—is treated by Ahmeti not as an obsolete penal theory, but as the central node for understanding the psychology of our society. The author clarifies with great lucidity how the panoptic principle extends beyond prison walls to the core logic of our social institutions: the school, the factory, the hospital, and the military.

The essence of the argument lies in the internalization of surveillance. When an individual believes he is being constantly observed, he begins to self-discipline himself. Ahmeti elevates this concept from its narrow architectural context and places it within the digital age, implying a critical question: are we not all inhabitants of a vast digital Panopticon, where our data is transparent to corporations and states, and where we regulate our own behavior in the presence of this subconscious surveillance? This is one of the book's greatest strengths: the ability to tie the abstract theory with the concrete sensibilities of our daily lives.

Through the detailed analysis that Ahmeti devotes to the "*History of Madness*" and the "*History of Sexuality*," the reader understands that Foucault's project was also a deconstruction of the modern subject itself. He shows that throughout different eras, the experience of "madness" and "desire" was not a biological constant, but was built by social practices and discourses.

Madness was transformed from a mystical phenomenon into a scientific object of psychiatry, thereby creating the category of the "insane" as the *Other* who must be isolated and cured. Similarly, sexuality became the central "secret" of our identity—a field to be perpetually investigated—transforming itself into a powerful mechanism for self-governance and control. Ahmeti emphasizes that these studies were not merely historical; they were a means of rendering "strange" and contestable what we consider as natural to ourselves. The question arises: are we truly our "sincere selves," or are we a historical product of various discourses that have taught us how to understand and express ourselves in a specific way?

One of the greatest merits of this book is the author's insistence on Foucault's radical contemporary relevance. Ahmeti argues convincingly that Foucault's choice as a subject matter of study is not accidental. In a world complicated by algorithms, social media, the management of global crises (health, climate), and identity wars, Foucauldian concepts become more tangible than ever.

Foucault does not offer ready-made answers, but a critical approach. He does not dictate "what must be done," but asks: "How did we get here?" and "What historical conditions made this state of affairs possible?" This is what Ahmeti calls the "ontology of the present"—an attempt to diagnose our era from within, without relying on borrowed doctrines. This approach provides the Albanian reader not with an imported ideology, but with a methodology

to analyze their own immediate reality, liberating them from the fatalism that things “must” be as they are.

In conclusion, *Michel Foucault – Power, Knowledge, the Individual* by Prof. Dr. Kushtrim Ahmeti is far more than a book. It is a complete intellectual project that fills a profound void. With a clear and organized structure, a sophisticated yet accessible language, and a rare interpretative depth, Ahmeti achieves something difficult: presenting a complex thinker in an accessible manner without vulgarization or oversimplification.

This book rescues philosophy from its academic prison and returns it to the world as a liberating practice—a tool for questioning, doubting, and imagining other possibilities. “The freedom we believe we enjoy is often the product of sophisticated mechanisms of discipline.” It is precisely because of this reality that Ahmeti’s work is not only valuable – it is essential. It addresses not only academics and students but every individual who feels the need to dismantle reality and seek, through permanent critique, the horizon of a more authentic freedom. In this sense, this book is a fundamental contribution to the cultivation of a critical, vibrant, and autonomous mind within the Albanian sphere. It serves as a proof that our perceived liberty is often a product of sophisticated disciplinary mechanisms, and that only through constant critique can we aspire toward true freedom.

BOOK REVIEW

THE REIGN OF QUANTITY AND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

By René Guénon, “*The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*”, Logos-A, Skopje 2024

Kushtrim Ahmeti

In an age saturated with the endless clamor of progress, where every day promises a new salvific technology and where the measure of income, data, and productivity appears to be the sole metric for understanding the value of things, the publication of René Guénon’s monumental work, “*The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*,” arrives as a profound, radical, and unsettling silence. This is not merely another philosophical volume; it is a metaphysical alarm, a rare testament of an intellect that refused to drift with the current of the age, choosing instead to measure the depth of our fall using the immutable criterion of the Perennial Wisdom (*Sophia Perennis*). For the Albanian public, this 2024 edition by Logos-A is more than a translation; it is the opening of an alternative portal, an invitation to view the world not through the narrow lens of the 20th or 21st centuries, but through the objective of eternal principles that guided traditional civilizations.

The essence of Guénon’s message is simple in principle yet dense in its radical depth: modernity is not the pinnacle of human history, but its most profound and perilous deviation. This is not an observation rooted in a romantic nostalgia for the past, but in a relentless metaphysical analysis. Guénon introduces us to two cardinal categories: **Quality** and **Quantity**.

Quality is the domain of Essence, of the Principle, of the Immovable and Transcendent Reality. It is the foundation of every true tradition, that which bestows meaning upon things and anchors them to their divine Origin. **Quantity**, on the other hand, is the domain of the outer shell, of division, of the material and of numbers. In all traditional societies—from the Hindu and

Buddhist to the Islamic and Medieval Christian—Quality predominated and regulated Quantity. Modernity, as Guénon diagnoses with chilling precision, represents the total inversion of this order. We have constructed a “Reign of Quantity,” where everything is reduced to its lowest, most measurable, and most external element. Spiritual life, art, education, and even human relationships are subjected to the logic of numbers, statistics, efficiency, and material production.

This “solidification” of the world is not a random or unpredictable process. Guénon, drawing from traditional Hindu doctrines, situates it within a vast cyclic cosmology. We are living in the end of the *Kali-Yuga* (the Dark Age), a long historical cycle characterized by a gradual deterioration, the loss of true knowledge, and the triumph of the most banal materialism. The “Signs of the Times” mentioned in the title are precisely the visible symptoms of this cyclic end: the spread of global uniformity (which masquerades as “globalization” but is, in fact, the destruction of all traditional diversities), the replacement of quality with quantity in every sphere, the collapse of true spiritual authorities, and the surge of the “false authorities” of profane science. When Guénon speaks of the “inversion of symbols,” he describes a demonic process in the strict sense of the word: sacred symbols, which traditions used to refer to higher realities, are now utilized to worship lower ones.

The eagle, a universal symbol of spiritual height, becomes a sign of material empires; fire, a symbol of mystic transformation, is reduced to a mere energy source; the very concept of “progress” is an inversion of the spiritual path that leads upward, turning it into a horizontal movement toward a “future” that is, in truth, always further from the Principle.

In this context, Guénon’s critique of modern science is devastating and fundamentally different from other known critiques. He does not accuse science of failing to discover “truth” in its own sense; he accuses it of being a form of knowledge that has focused its attention solely on the domain of quantity, declaring it to be the only reality. “Profane” science, as Guénon termed it, is profane precisely because it is severed from any metaphysical and transcendent source. It studies only the various correlations in the world of the external shell, refusing to inquire about Essence and Purpose. This renders it not “wrong” at its own level, but fundamentally incapable of understanding the true nature of reality and, consequently, dangerous when it seeks to replace all other forms of knowledge. Thus, the myth of “progress” is shattered. What we

call progress—faster technology, greater production, wider communication—is, from a metaphysical perspective, a progression toward degradation. It is the ability to manipulate the world of quantity with ever-increasing efficiency while completely losing any connection to the world of quality, to meaning, and to Truth.

A particularly vital and prophetic aspect of Guénon's work is the phenomenon of the "Counter-Tradition." This phenomenon is not a denial of tradition, but a demonic parody of it. Since man is fundamentally a spiritual being with an unceasing need for the Sacred, when the connection to true Tradition is severed, he seeks replacements. And the forces of the end-times, of the *Kali-Yuga*, offer these substitutes in abundance: political ideologies that demand unshakable faith and sacrifice (a parody of religious faith), new "pseudo-sciences" and New Age movements that offer rapid spiritual "solutions" tailored to the ego, and even new forms of art and music that claim a "ritual" power but are detached from any sacred source. This is "pseudo-spirituality," one of the surest signs of the end of a cycle. Guénon warns us that this is the greatest danger because it deceives people by leading them away from the true solution, making them believe they are finding something higher while they are, in fact, sinking into the lowest.

What relevance does this message, written primarily in the first half of the 20th century, hold for the Albanian reader today? Perhaps more than ever. Albanian society has experienced, over several decades, an accelerated process of "modernization" that represents exactly the transition from an still-traditional way of life (even in its simplified form) into the "Reign of Quantity." The demand for economic development, European integration, and technological adoption often brings with it, unnoticed, an adoption of all the principles that Guénon views as destructive: practical materialism, the cult of quantity, the weakening of traditional family and social structures, and a profound confusion in matters of identity and meaning. Reading Guénon is not an invitation to an unthinking reactionary turn to the past. It is a call for an intellectual return to Principles. This means taking a critical distance from every form of modernity, evaluating it not by its material success, but by its proximity to or distance from the eternal Truth. For a culture like ours, in constant search of self-definition, Guénon offers an unforgettable filter: that which is true, beautiful, and good does not change with the fashions of the time; it is present in

the essence of every true tradition, and our task is to grasp that essence, not to imitate the external forms of a dying modern world.

Guénon's conclusion, though permeated by a sense of great urgency for the times in which we live, is not fatalistic. The cycle of history implies that after a time of total darkness, when the Reign of Quantity has reached its extreme limit of dissolution, there will come a necessary return to Unity and Quality. The return to the Principle is inevitable on a cosmic scale, for reality cannot be permanently based on an error. The message for the individual is one of choice and will: you can choose to remain imprisoned in the "prison" of quantity, feeling free while running along its fortifications, or you can choose to return, with mind and heart, toward the true source of Quality, even if this requires a solitary exit from the great current. "*The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*" is not, therefore, a pessimistic book. It is the book of a true realist, showing us the depth of the crisis to reveal the only way out: upward, toward that which is eternally True, Good, and Beautiful. In this sense, this edition is a precious gift to the Albanian language and a courageous decree from a mind that refuses to bow before the idols of our time.

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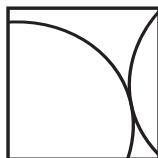
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