

Al-Ahram



Religious Discourse and the Human Condition: Which Comes First?

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Out of fear of being judged as supporters of Mubarak’s regime (the most miserable regime in the history of modern Egypt), many intellectuals chose not to engage in critical dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood. The corrupt regime had long claimed—in its propaganda outreach to Westerners and Copts—to be the “civil and tolerant alternative” to the Brotherhood, when in fact, the nominally “civil” status of the regime was merely a mask to conceal its authoritarian, totalitarian and even militant essence.

New conditions in Egypt, following the Mubarak regime’s collapse, render it obligatory that we critically examine and discuss the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideology, for the sake of our nation’s future. Many people assume, of course, that the group will become more open-minded, now that it’s free of oppression from Mubarak’s regime. In other words, the conditions required for a fruitful and productive dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood have been fulfilled, from the perspective of civil society. Hopefully, members of the Brotherhood will be able to emerge from the defensive position they have long occupied, in which they were unable to critically examine or discuss the dogmatic discourse they employed as a kind of shelter, or ideological bunker.

If we all agree upon the fact that Egypt is currently in dire need of a serious and fruitful dialogue among its citizens, the only way to achieve such dialogue is to construct an open intellectual arena, in which everyone can share his or her views with others, for the sake of mutual enrichment. We do not need an atmosphere in which all parties assert the absolute validity of their own vision, and seek to impose it upon others, or cling to such ideas and ask others to accept or reject them, despite the feeble evidence adduced for said opinions. The prerequisite for any productive dialogue is a critical examination of any and all concepts being discussed, along with their intellectual foundations or lack thereof. That is to say, concepts should be treated not as ideological “slogans” used to mobilize people, but as “subjects” of discussion that may lead to further knowledge and understanding.

The basic idea being propagated by the Muslim Brotherhood within the context of our current, wide-ranging—though by no means profound—debate about the future of Egypt, is that of establishing a civil state within a religious (i.e., Islamic) framework. The religious framework of the state is a central element of the Muslim Brotherhood’s vision of a future

Egypt. Within this context, the Muslim Brotherhood argues for a relationship between the civil and religious elements of the state, in which the religious will definitively control the civil.

This view is based upon an implicit assumption that what they term “religious” is divine and immutable, while the “civil” structures of society are created by humans, and mutable. Hence, the civil/mutable must fall under the authority of the religious/immutable. Of course, if one believes it is obligatory to have stable and immutable criteria of government, it is far easier to attribute such stability to the Divine, rather than to humans.

While it is reasonable to acknowledge that the civil/human dimension of life is mutable, the opposing claim—i.e., that what the Brotherhood describes as the “religious/divine” is absolute and immutable—is subject to argument and refutation. This is because even a preliminary examination of religion reveals the distinction between a theological/spiritual/ritual aspect that facilitates the relationship between man and God (relevant to what we call the private domain), and a legal/practical aspect that structures the relationship between man and others (relevant to what we call the public domain).

According to Islam itself, the first aspect (i.e., the private domain) is shared by the people of all scriptures. “Say: ‘People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate naught with Him, and do not take others as Lords, apart from God.’ And if they turn their backs, say: ‘Bear witness that we are muslims’” (Quran 3: 64).

On the other hand, Islam assumes and accepts that the second aspect (i.e., the public domain) will be subject to disagreement and various modes of implementation amongst the people of scriptures, as stated in the Qur’an: “To every one of you We have appointed a right way and an open road” (5:48). Religion, then, cannot be stable and immutable except in one of its two aspects (i.e., the spiritual), and its teachings cannot be applied to the things of this world in a rigid and absolutist manner. This reality is completely acknowledged and accepted by the majority of Muslim scholars (*ulama*) in both classical and recent times, including al-Qurtubi [a renowned Qur’anic exegete and jurist, who died in 1273], Muhammad Abduh [Egyptian jurist, religious scholar and liberal reformer who died in 1905] and M. Shaltut [Islamic theologian and Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar, who died in 1963].

The jurisprudential aspect of religion is not only mutable and different from one religion to the next, but also mutable within a specific religion, from one time or place to the next. This existence of diversity—within the jurisprudential aspect of religion in particular, and human existence in general—is so essential that God explicitly recognizes it in the Qur’an (“And they routed them, by the will of God, and David slew Goliath; and God gave him the kingdom, and wisdom, and taught him as He willed. And if God did not check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be utterly corrupted.” [2:251]), as do traditional Muslim scholars, who consider different opinions among jurists to be an expression of God’s mercy and compassion.

Diversity within the legalistic aspect of religion cannot be explained but through the human condition, as “[t]here is”—according to al-Qurtubi—“complete agreement amongst intellectuals that the revelation of the prophets is meant to foster the religious and worldly interests of humanity. Bearing this fact in mind, we may recognize that divine discourses are mutable, in accord with the changing needs of humanity. God behaves like a physician who

takes into account the condition of a patient. God, likewise, willingly takes into account the changing conditions of humanity, and His discourse is mutable for that reason.”

According to al-Qurtobi’s statement, the mutability of divine discourse arises from the mutability of people’s needs, which means that civil/mutable human interest is the proximate cause for the mutability of divine discourse itself. Thus, religion—which the Muslim Brotherhood views as the necessary framework for a civil state—in fact arises from, and finds its justification within, the prevailing civil/human condition. If mutability is acceptable within the divine discourse in general, it must be even more acceptable within the legalistic dimension of that discourse—which is completely related to the public domain. Denying the relationship between the mutability of divine discourse and evolving human needs, leads to attributing ignorance to God, which no one can accept.

The legalistic dimension of religion (which structures relationships between people) is of course what the Muslim Brotherhood seeks to install as the “religious framework” of the state, since it is inconceivable that the other (theological/spiritual/ritual) dimension of religion, which facilitates the relationship between man and God, could be employed for this purpose.

The fact that the legalistic dimension of religion is not only mutable, but also—and most importantly—determines the content of divine discourse, leads to the solid conclusion that it is, in fact, the mutable civil/human condition that controls religious/divine discourse. In other words, it is the condition of society that underlies and animates religious discourse. When members of the Muslim Brotherhood speak of installing religious discourse as the “immutable” framework of a civil state, they seek nothing less than to mask their political ideology and agenda behind the sacredness of religion, in order to render their actions immune to questioning or criticism. Which is the point, exactly!

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عن الديني والمدني.... وأيهما المرجع للآخر؟

بقلم : علي مبروك

الذي ثم رسم فرعت مل يذلا - كرابم ماظنل معد ةباتمب منأ يلع رمالا يلا رظنلا ةيشخ
- اطاطحن او اروهدت اهخي رات تاظحل دشأ يف ال اسؤبل او ةساعتلا يف هل

ناوخلإ ةعامج يوروتاراعش عم يدج راوح يف طارخنال نع اومجأ دق نيريثك نإف
يهو , حماستملا يندملا اهليدب منأ ةفارخ يلع كرابم ماظن شاتعا يتلا نيملسمل
برغلا يف هي معادل اهق يوست نع , مطوقس ةظحل يتح , ماظنل فقوت ي مل يتلا ةفارخ
نع هتلودل يندملا لكشلاب مهليخ نيذلا نم مهريغو طابقأ نم ةعساو حئارش نيبو
يوظلسلا يسيلوبل اهرهوج

هرطت ام عم راوخلال عجي كرابم طوقس دعب عضولا فالتخا نأ يف لكش نم سيلو
يعول عم اصوصخو , ملاعلا رهبا دللب قيلي لبقتسم لجأ نم ابجاو اضرف ةعامجلا
حبصت نأ , ةدراطملا او فادهتس الل اعوضوم اهنوك نم ررحتلا دعب , دبال ةعامجلا نأ
تاخانم ال فرعت ال ال يوط تلظ نأ دعب , رواحتلاو احاتفنالا قطنم يلع احاتفنارثكأ
, جت نم راوخل ترفاوت دق طورشلا نإف - ةدحاو ةملك يفو - نذإو . مصاختلاو نيوختلا
دعب ناوخلإ باطخل ضرعتلا نع نومجحي اونك نم لك نع جرحل اعفترا نأ دعب
, يرخأ ةهجنم , ناوخلإ حبصأ نأ دعبو , ةهجنم يسوبالكلا كرابم ماظنل يودملا طوقسلا
نيلباق ريغ مهتل عج يتلا ةي عافدلا مهعقاوم يف راشحنالا نم ررحتلا يلع ةردق رثكأ
, عدلصلا هنوصح نوسرتمتي اولظ باطخ ةشقانم يلع - نيرداق يتح وأ -

طوقس دعب رسم لبقتسم لوح نهارلا شاقنل قاييس يف ةعامجلا هرطت ام مهأل علو
ةي عجرم تاذ ةيندم قلود ءانب يلا اهيعس نم هل جيورتلا يرجي اميف لثمتي , كرابم
زيمتي قلودل ةينيدلا ةي عجرملا موهفم نأ ديكأت هعم نكمي يذلا وحنلا يلعو , ةينيد
اذه نمضو . ةيرصملا قلودلا لبقتسملا ةعامجلا ةبراقم يف ةيزكرملا غلاب روضحب
يلع يندملا او ينيذلا نيب ةقال علل ابيترت ةعامجلا هي مفدت يذلا يزكرملا روضحل
اذه نأب هيونتلا مزلي هنإف , يندملا ددحلا عجرملا وه ينيذلا هي ف نوكي وحن
يملإ وه ينيذلا نأب رمضملا ضارتملا نم عون يلع موقى ةقال علل بيترتلا
نأ هعم دبال يذلا وحنلا يلعو , ريغتملا يناسنإل وه يذلا يندملا لباقم يف , تباتلا
عوجرلا متي ام وه عجرملا ذإف . هءارو يتح وأ , تباتلا ينيذلا لوح ريغتملا يندملا رودي

يذلتا تبثلا نم وحن يل ع مروصت نم دبالت ناك من إف, فالخ نم جرحمل اسامتلا هيل
يناسن إال /يندملا نم رثكأب, يهل إال /ينيدلا يف مضارتفا لهسي
يضا رتفال نإف, ري غتملا يناسن إال وه يندملا نأ ضارتفا يف لداجي ال ادحأ ناك اذإو
عون يلا جاتحي امنإ, اعجرم منم لعجي يذلا وحنلا يل ع تبثلا وه ينيدلا نأب لئاقلا
نع فشكي - نيد ي - نيدلا يف - ايلو وأ ولو - المأت نأ قحلا ذإ. طبضلا او ديدحتلا نم
ام وهو) هبرب ناسن إال عقال ع مظتنني يدبعت /يديقع بناج نيب هيف زييمتلا ناكم
عقال ع مظتنني يلماعت /يعيرشت رخأو, (صاخلا لاجملا وأ نأشلاب صتخي هنأ لاقني
وأ نأشلاب صخي - هقباس سلك ع يل ع - هنأ لاقني ام وهو) هريغب (ععام جو ادرف) ناسن إال
مالس إال بسحب كلذو - لبقني نيدلا نإف, زييمتلا اذقاييس نمضو. (ماعلا لاجملا
نايدال لهأ نيب قافتل اعوضوم, يدبعتلا /يديقع مبناج يف, نوكني نأ - مسفن
الو, هللا إال دب عن ال أمكن يبو ان نيب ءاوس قملك يلا اولاعت باتكلا لهأ اي لق, اعيمج
اودهش! اولوقف اولوت نإف هللا نود نم ابابراً اضعب انضعب ذختي الو ايئيش هب كرشن
/يعيرشتلا مبناج يف, نوكني نأ لبقني - اضيأ مالس إال بسحبو - منكلو, نوملسم انأب
نذإو. اجامنمو عرش مكنم انلعج لكل ثيحي, نيا بتلا او فالخال اعوضوم يلماعتلا
بناج ينعاو) هيبناج دحأ يف ال إتبثلل اعوضوم نيدلا ضارتفا نكميال منإف
اعوضوم نوكني نأ داكيام وهو, قلم وحن يل ع ادبأ سيلو, (ععيرشلا سيلو قديقعلا
وأ مدبعم عم يبترقلا هيف فلتخي ال يذلا وحنلا يل عو, ابيرقت قفاكلا قافتال
يلا نيد نم طقف فلتخي ال نيدلل يعيرشتلا بناجلا نأ قحلا ذإ. بتوتلش خيشلا
ذإو. يرخأ يلا ءئييب نمو, يرخأ يلا قظحل نم نيدلا سفن نمض فلتخي ولب, رخأ
عضولا فالخال يلا إال, نيدلا نم يعيرشتلا بناجلا يف, فالخال اذقاييس
دصق ءايبنال عئارش نأ يل ع ءالقلا نيب يبترقلا بسحب - فالخال ثيحي, يناسن إال
متاباطخ لدبتت امنإف لكل ذب ماعلا نأو... ءيوي نيدلا او ءينيدلا قلخال حل اصم امب
متي فلخ كلذو يعارف, ليلعلا لواح يعارملا بي بطلاك, حل اصملا لدبتت بسحب
(باطخلا لدبتت يبترقلا قلعي اذكهو. لدبتي هباطخ وه إال هل إال, متداربو متيئيشمب
يذلا وحنلا يل عو, (ةيندملا وأ) ءيوي نيدلا او ءينيدلا رشبال حل اصم لدبتت يل ع (يهل إال
باطخلا يف ال دببت هاري امل ددحملا عجرملا وه لدبتتلا وأ ري غتملا يندملا هعم نوكني
ععامج هنم ديرت يذلا ينيدلا تالوحت نأ ينعي لكل ذ نإف عبطلابو. رشبال يهل إال
متي عجرم دجني نأ - مسفن وه - داكي, ءيندملا قلودلل اعجرم نوكني نأ نيملسملا ناوخ إال
يهل إال باطخلا لاطي لدبتت لعجي يبترقلا ناك اذإو. يندملا /يناسن إال تالوحت يف
باطخلا اذقاييس يعيرشتلا بناجلا نمض لدبتتلا روضح نإف, مومعلا يل ع رشبال يلا
ري غتني يذلا رشبال عقاوب بناجلا اذقاييس ثيحي نم ينعاو, قلاحم ال يلو نوكني
مزل ي هل علو. امودو اتابث رثكال امنأ روصت مزل ي يتلا مهدياق عب سيلو, لدبتتو
, يهل إال باطخلا تال دببت طبر مدع نأ نم يبترقلا هيل إال راص امب, انه, هيونتلا
وأ) ءادبلاب هللا مصو يلا - قلاحم ال يدوي فوس مهعقاوو رشبال حل اصم تال دببت
نيملسملا ناوخ إال ورظنم هينعي ام لعلو. ادبأ هللا قح يف هل ببق نكميال ام وهو, (لهجلا
قلعتي يذلا نيدلا نم يعيرشتلا بناجلا اذقاييس فرصني امنأ قلودلل عجرمك نيدلاب
يه يتلا قلودلا رموجب ال اصتا رثكال بناجلا وه امب كلذو, هريغب ناسن إال عقال عب
. هريغب (ععام جو ادرف) ناسن إال امسفن عقال علا ميظنتلا راطلضحم - ءأشنلا بسحبو
ناسن إال عقال ع صخي امم امتي عجرم قلودلا ذختت نأ روصت يال هنأ يل ع كلذو ينبنوي
نوكت نأ هعم نكميال وحن يل ع عقال علا كلت ءدارفو ءيصوصخ نم ادتبا كلذو, هبرب

بن اجلان األ - كل ذلك لاجل او يقبى ال اذو . عوم جملا تاقل ع ميظنت هب امل اعجرم
نع ثي دحل ا دن ع دوصق ملامه , هريغب ناسن اإل اقال ع مظنتني يذلا نيذلا نم يعيرشتلا
نم هيف امل سسؤي ام دجي يذلا نيذلا نم بن اجلا وهو , ةيندملا ةلودلل ةيندي ةيعجرم
كلذ نإف , يندملا يناسن اإل اعضولا يف - راكن اإل نيلباقل ا ريغ - ةري اغملا او فالتخال
ادح ا لظي نيحو . سكال سىلو , ينيذلل عجرملا وه يندملا نأ - ةقراقملاو ينعى
هتپور يفخي نأ ال ا لعفياال هناف , يندملا عجرمك ينيذلا نع , كلذ دعب , ثدحتي
مهفلا قطنم قوف اهب ومست ةناصحا اهيلع يفضيلا نيذلا ءارو اهت عيبطب ةيندملا
تالفال او هزواجت يلا رصم يعست يذلا ماظنلا هب لغتشا يذلا قطنملا وهو , ةلاءاسملا او
هل يباح نم .

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