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# INTRODUCING EXISTENTIALIST PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES FOR CULTIVATING AUTHENTICITY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Malick Elias<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*The Arab Muslim world has had brief encounters with “Western Existentialism,” a post-Enlightenment European literary movement, during the nineteenth century. (Di-Capua, Existentialism 70 years After 2019) mentions it was introduced by Alexander Koyré, a fleeing Russian French immigrant who took up a teaching position at a Cairo university thereby exposing a generation of young Egyptians, to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty the likes of Husserl and Heidegger. Most notable among them was Abdur Rahmān Badawī (b.1917-d.2002). Since then, different Arab and Islamic forms of existentialist thought evolved in literary works aimed at decolonialisation and suppression around the Arab Muslim world. Though this article is not a follow up of those early achievement it sets out to highlight key issues and themes of what a speculative “Islamic” existentialist approach to education practice (thereafter referred to as EIEPs) must consider.*

**Keywords:** authenticity, subjectification, genuine time, self-authoring

## Introduction

During the nineteen seventies and eighties as Islamic curricula and *madrasah*-type education grew in popularity, the gradual inclusion of subjects like math and science into Islamic Education programs of study raised hopes for an end to dual provision of the subject and

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possibilities of it joining the social sciences. As a starting point current practices in Islamic Education are largely detached from presential concerns focusing upon mainly passing on tradition. Muslim institutions continue to struggle finding ways of realising Islamic Education as a fully integrated subject in the school curriculum as objective knowledge as (Hefner, 2010; Thobani, 2007) shows. Competition at the level of the global economy as (Arjmand, Islamic Education in Iran 2018) has shown in the case of post revolution Iran led to the transformation of State policy towards the subject after attempting to maintain the study of classical works in its madrasah curriculum. The rhetoric of post-revolution promised to cultivate social, moral and spiritual values to strengthen the faith of Islam and expand them to the global Ummah (p.729). However, as student results showed low progress in comparison to international standards alternative measures for increasing national competitiveness bought about changes in approach (p.733). By the nineteen seventies as Islamic resurgence grew and a generation of learners with less fidelity to traditional schools of thought or “educational discipleship” (p.214) was evident, Islamic Education was back on the curriculum, albeit as a subject to be explained and understood as “objective knowledge” (Hefner, 2010:215, 513) and for pre-empting fundamentalism.

## **Methodology**

The First World Conference on Muslim Education held in 1977 in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, a milestone in bringing academics, scholars and educationists together on many questions pertaining to educational philosophies and practices, and ought to have provided ways forward. One accomplishment of that meeting was the launch of “the Islamization of Knowledge” or IOK project. In recent times, one such turn in IOK has been a call for epistemological integration (Fathi Hasan Malkawi, 2005) positing that “epistemological integration” has two sides to it, a “productive dimension” (Islamization) and a “consumptive” one (Integration). The first pertains to the evaluation of knowledge systems and subsequent (re)construction; and the latter rests upon understanding a phenomenon, its intellectual structures (p.3-4). What is important to note about this Epistemological

Integration concept, says Malkawi, is that it is “linked to the unity of knowledge” by which he means Tawhīd (p.5). In (Sardar and Henzell-Thomas, 2018) “*Rethinking Reform in Higher Education: From Islamization to Integration of Knowledge*,” engineers of this turn lays out the new agenda. He says,

“Our goal is to create a new paradigm, based on the first principles, where knowledge, creation, life and humanity are perceived as integrated within a universal framework. As such, we must realize that the way forward is a new mode of consciousness which is integrative and inclusive and involves embracing the Other. We aim to initiate a process that will usher a revival of thought and spirit of inquiry in Muslim societies, shifted away from a politics of identity towards aspirational values, encourage engagement with the contemporary world with all its complexity and contradictions, and create an informed citizenry fully equipped to take leadership roles in the modern world” (p.16-17).

In that shifting in focus, voices and questions are raised over the meaning of Islam as a closed “religious tradition” (Ahmed, 2016; Panjwani, 2004) vis-à-vis its universal purpose. At the background of that shifting discourse the aim here is to explore the possibilities of a narrative from within the Quranic worldview speculating for an existentialist approach with relevance to the educational practice.

By existentialist qua philosophical, a phenomenology and hermeneutical approach to existence is intended. Phenomenology as a methodology is contested, both within the Western and Muslim intellectual tradition. However, in the broadest sense it signifies a descriptive philosophy attributed to Edmund Husserl (b.1859-d.1938) who endeavored to establish it as a science (Urmson and Ree, 1992). In the intellectual tradition of Islam, it derives from Muslim speculation over distinction between ‘necessary or immediate’ and ‘acquired knowledge’ elucidated by (Elkaysi-Friemuth, 2006) in her comparative study of three classical Muslim thinkers. This paper



however, inclines to an ‘acosmic’ reading of existence in the vein of Mullā Sadrā ‘s primacy of existence or *‘Aṣālah al-Wujūd*.

### ***Pedagogy***

Derived from Greek origins the “agogic” in pedagogy conveys meanings ‘to guide’ and ‘lead’ someone, as in the case of learning. Like pedagogy is “andragogy.” The former is often used contextual to secondary schooling, while ‘andragogy’ is used with reference to higher education. Nonetheless, they they overlap and with relevance to phenomenology, (Manen M. V., 2014) explains,

“... An agogical approach to phenomenology aims to guide the person to the project and pathos of phenomenological inquiry and to help stimulate personal insights, sensibilities, and sensitivities for a phenomenology of practice” (p.19)

In the Qur’anic disclosures the idea a pathos are referred to by the use of terms such as *Minhāj* or way or being (cf 5:48) and *Baṣīrah* a “vision” identifiable with “practical wisdom” or *Hikmah*. Together, they are construed as pointing to a pedagogical discourse (cf 12:108).

In contemporary Western educational practice pedagogy tends to be merged with teaching practice making it difficult to determine what that hidden aspect of the curriculum often referred to as pedagogy entails. One is likely to find, for instance, (Husbands & Pearce, 2012) a list of effective ‘pedagogical practices,’ conflating aspects of effective teaching as pedagogy, but not what underlying values and suppositions are taught.

In the (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2013a) definition as well, the mentioning of “curriculum issues” supplants points to pedagogy but in an ambiguous manner as “the art of teaching.”

One of the main concerns regarding pedagogy is understanding what it means vis-à-vis education and instruction. But this is not a new problem. (Gunther, 2006:73-376) illustrates that the Muslim philosopher, Abu Naṣr al-Farābī (b.870-d.950) the first scholar to forward an idea of an integrated curriculum of religion and philosophy in the Islamic intellectual tradition, in the opening to his



monograph *al-Burhān* (The Demonstration) explains the difference between them as well. Education, for him had to do with schooling, *Ta'lim* or *Tadrīs* and *Ta'dīb* (instruction) with character refinement (Gunther 2006:374). Behind the conception of pedagogy and the pedagogue, in its Greek origins is an intriguing history of a slave's relationship with the care and cultivation of his master's children (Burgess, 2002; Mark K. Smith, 2012-2021 cited in The encyclopedia.com). The same can be said for the al-Mawālī (singular of mawlā), often glossed over as "non-Arab Muslim" retainers in the pre and post Islamic eras of the Middle east as Patrica Crone's (1974) study "The Mawālī in the Umayyad Period" shows. And (Gunthers, 2006) lists a range of early Muslim pedagogues such as the ninth-century, by the Muslim scholar Muḥammad Ibn Saḥnūn (202/815/7-256/867/9) intitled, "*Adāb al-Mu'allimin*" or "Rules of Conduct for Teachers." He avers that the teacher's character and functioning was pivotal in the moral refinement of the learner. Constrasting him is Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr Ibn Baḥr al-Kinānī al-Baṣrī, popularly known as Al-Jāhiz (b.766-d.868), a rationalist Mu'tazilah scholar writing during the reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, current day Iraq around the same time as Ibn Saḥnūn but in a more cosmopolitan urban settings. He recommends less memorisation and more development of deductive reasoning and independent thinking skills, arguing that depending upon memory alone made the mind lazy.

The point being that determining a system of pedagogical practice will be more complex than it seem. New methods in curriculum design which has shifted towards a process of partnerships between government, social and commercial agencies (UNESCO, 2013b) entails that deciding what values are taught is school do not undermine competing interests as (Bernstein, 1990 and (Anyon, 2010)) study suggests.

In the development of education in the West, the crossing over of roles between pedagogy and its various sources in school provision has a long history of debates. (Smith 2012, 2021) avers that discussions on the distinction between both roles were still around at the time of Immanuel Kant (b.1724-d.1804) when he wrote "On Pedagogy (Über Pädagogik) in 1803. By the close the eighteen

century Johann Friedrich Herbart (b.1776-d.1841) systemises a general theory of education along with pedagogy (*Allgemeine pädagogik* – General Pedagogics, 1806 and *Umriß Pädagogischer Vorlesungen*, 1835 – Plan of Lectures on Pedagogy and included in Herbart 1908 via (Smith, 2012-2021). Herbart makes a distinction between education (Latin: *educatio*) and teaching (Latin: *instructio*) as well, where the former pertains to the shaping of human character and the latter, to teaching, knowledge development and skills; after which he then synthesises teaching as the main activity of education (Ibid). Nevertheless despite the overlapping between education and instruction, what must be remembered is that “knowledge” or al-‘Ilm acquisition from which the word al-Ta’līm derives occurs both at the level of delivering human understanding and insights into the objects of existence and of things in themselves. Namely, there is always a subject in the face of two objects. This “double objectivity” principle combines claims to ‘knowledge by correspondence’ as contestable acquired fact on the one hand; and that of truth as representation. (Yazdi, 1992) in his “The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy..” refers to it as Knowledge by Presence” or the “objective-object transcending even representation towards “Existential” unicity (p.20). He also refers to the objective here as transitive. Whereas, in the first sense of knowledge by correspondence is the subjective-object or immanent-object idea, in the latter the objective-object is the realm of pure thought and creativity. Traditional Muslim epistemologists refer to the dual processes of the act of knowing as necessary or a priori (*Ḍurūrī*) and acquired or posteriori (*Iktisābī*) ways of knowing. A priori pertaining to the psychological, intuitive and sources of pure thought and the latter to sociological aspects. In modern epistemology Thomas Khun’s (1962) “*Theory of Scientific Revolutions*” problematises the latter and W. V. O . Quine questions the traditional distinction between the two (Martin, 2010). Part of (Yazdi, 1992) argument and so is Ṣadrā and Merleau-Ponty is that both the inner as in the spiritual, ethical, existentially meaningful and outer aspects of knowledge as in scientific achievements in human understanding are entangled and cannot be separated.

For the rest of the article only some essential points contextual

to educational instruction and existentialist pedagogies can be stressed. First,

“is the link between personal motivation and the learning of pre-defined outcomes in the form of adaptive skills” (Usher, 2009).

In that regard, the pedagogue is a vital source of pedagogy and the idea of the hidden curriculum. More to come on that. Second, a a-centred existentialist philosophy does not seek to ignore worldly nor other worldly existence but to bring both into balance. Modern education is often criticised for being employment focused, accentuating the retainment of knowledge and marketable skills. It is not aimed at, for instance, educating the child for understanding social avarice, or coping with the pressures of consumerist culture. Instead, it prepares them for a life subjugated to material concerns. Existentialist educational pedagogies aims at restoring a balance between the individual and society. In the Quranic worldview while it encourages taking one’s portion from this world, it cautions against neglecting those aptitudes for journeying to the Afterlife.

Three, in the domain of practice, though pedagogy is part of teaching and learning it is not a teaching and learning methodology. For instance, constructivism, is a methodology for teaching and learning. However, pedagogy involves a vision, a set of beliefs about existence, human nature, epistemology and the aims of educational practice (Daniels, 2014:25). It is subtle, indirect and also occurs outside of school.

“Human learning is the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (of through any combination) and integrated into the individual person’s biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person” (Javis in Illeris, 2009:25).

Learning by its very nature is existential, it occurs everywhere at all times, even before birth in the womb until the loss of consciousness at the time of death. It begins with bodily sensations which operates mostly unobserved until a disjuncture happens which focuses one's sensations into attention and then the search for meaning begins (Ibid). Moreover, that learning process, particularly outside of the classroom on the social stage is filled with "continuities and discontinuities." A popular view held by Otto Friedrich Bollnow (Koerrenz, 2017; Jaspers, 1970; Toynbee, 1946) for instance, arguing that human beings are continuously involved in life situations and that occasionally unexpected encounters as Bollnow coins it "Grenzsituationen or boundary situations," heralds new growth phases of becoming "*the Existenz we potentially are*" thus evoking an intense process of self reflection. These situations humans find themselves in during the course of their lives are events inducing anxieties and hardships, but also evoking trust and hope in divine assistance, are called *fitan* in the Qur'an. The notion of *fitnah* is intrinsic to what the Qur'an refers to as *SunnatuAllah* (objective law), in a similar sense to (Yazdi, 1992) "transitive-objective" and (Toynbee, 1946) "challenge and response theory." The (Qur'an 2:155, 29:2) alludes to similar concepts in the intellectual and emotional-*cum*-spiritual growth of individuals as well:

"And most certainly shall We try you by means of danger, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of [labour's] fruits. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity who, when calamity befalls them, say, "Verily, unto God do we belong and, verily, unto Him we shall return." It is they upon whom their Sustainer's blessings and grace are bestowed, and it is they, they who are on the right path! (Muḥammad Asad's translation of 2:155-157, verse markers removed by current author)

Pedagogical practice must therefore prepare learners to cope with uncertainty and crisis (*fitan*), in ways that develop in them the aptitudes of hope (*Imān*), resilience (*Jihād*), perseverance (*Ṣabr*) and steadfastness (*Ikhlāṣ*) in the pursuit of life endeavours and mere

existence. In that regard, Islamic teacher education could include in its programs themes from the writings of Imam Al-Ghazali's "Revival of the Sciences of Din (Ethical life)" read contextually to its time with an understanding of secular modernity as a process of "disenchantment" (Weber, 1946) towards the sacred (Taylor, 2007). A better and more accurate term is "demagification" as noted in (Han, 2015) following scholars such as Jeremy Stolow (2013) and Gilbert Germain (1993) retranslation of it. Their argument is that 'disenchantment' sets up an epistemological battle between the past, tradition, and 'religion' in confrontation with science, technology and progress. Demagification they argue entails that what the West has done is resignified metaphysical meanings. A similar argument that Derrida makes against his counterparts charging that it is impossible to step outside metaphysics (Biesta, 2009).

Two theories having the most comprehensive insights into human learning according to Jarvis are (Illeris, 2002) and (Wenger, 1998). Illeris's work, explores psychological questions, but Wenger supplements it by focusing upon the sociological. A key distinction between the two is that while psychological theories, are often cognitive-centred, thereby leading to pedagogical practices focusing upon information processing and problem solving; social learning theories emphasise interpersonal skills based upon imitation and modeling (Wenger in Illeris, 2009:216-218). Jarvis argues that what is missing from the range of theories on learning are 'philosophical perspectives' that recognises the 'inter-subjectivity of social life and human learning' (Illeris, 2009:32). The up shot is that (Illeris, 2009:9) highlights the three most dimensions of learning: One, the content; the incentives and the environment.

The content must contain the normal things like the knowledge and skills to be acquired, but other aspects of the hidden curriculum, consisting of contesting opinions, attitudes, values, socially expected behaviours reflected in the methods and teaching strategies. However, the most powerful part of the tripartite structure of learning are in the incentives for learning. (Illeris, 2009:10) describes those in the following words:

"The incentive dimension provides and directs the mental energy that is necessary for the learning process

to take place. It comprises such elements as feelings, emotions, motivation and volition [...] incentives are always influenced by the content...”

In that regard (Saeverot, 2013)’s “Indirect Pedagogy,” (thereafter: IP) explaining existentialist educational strategies, based upon Keirkegaard idea of pedagogical subtlety (Smeyers, 2018) is important. Illeris adds that in a classroom situation, though the focus of teaching is often upon the content of the student’s understanding there is a considerable amount of subtle meta-learning taking place in the classroom. Realising this should increase teachers’ awareness of ways in which learning incentives are dependent upon the interaction between learners’ socio-cultural, and material environments as well.

Connected to the pedagogical spirit and personal style of the educator are the various “communities of practice” to which learners are exposed to as well (Wenger (1998) in Illeris, 2009:216-218). The diversity of competing pedagogical discourses circulating within life-worlds of learners are everywhere: at home, school, in the clubs and in hobbies shared with others, will impact upon the ways they learn, having their own routines, rituals, practices, symbols, histories and so on. Within each life-world, members squabble, disagree, hate each other and come to agreements. They find ways of surviving. Wenger thinks that perhaps there is a need to rethink learning by placing the emphasis upon participation. This means that for individuals learning becomes an issue of engagement. He reminds us that the situations in which learning most happens are not those “in which we learn most, or most deeply,” but are more like ‘volcanic eruptions’ (Illeris, 2009:212-214). Adding, that perhaps ‘more than learning itself, it is our conception of learning that needs urgent attention when we choose to meddle with it on the scale on which we do today (Illeris, 2009:210-214).

(Mayes’, Five Dimensions of Existentially Authentic Education 2010) offers some additional insights on existentialist educational practice. He says, that an existentially authentic education is oriented towards allowing teachers and students to explore their life narratives. It is an education for meaning, transformation and transcendence. He summarises it into five dimensions. First, it is “education as caring” and based upon a

“relational pedagogy” which means student-centred and not curriculum-centred. In this way it is transformational, focused upon helping the student to find their own life meanings on their journeys of becoming. Second, it is also based upon the pedagogical practices of “conscientization” which, according to (Freire, 1970) is to transcend the act of mere existence by engaging in facticity and creating possibilities for becoming a conscientious human being. Third, teaching is approached in such a manner that the student experiences it like a work of art. Fourth, it entails that teaching must be dialogic, civil and honest.

Last, existentialist educational pedagogies, in Mayes view, has to treat the classroom as a sacred space in which learners are encouraged to transcend the limitations of their life-worlds. The whole enterprise of teaching is approached as a divine sacred duty. Mayes writes,

“Education in the spirit is not typically “religious” nor need it even be ‘spiritual.’ The only requirement is that it be an occasion for the individual, in his own quiet and particular way, to seek out the presence of the Divine inheres in education” (Mayes, 2010:36).

Mayes is Christian by orientation, Jungian in his psychological approach, viz, analytical; and his existentialism reflects similar ideas from a plethora of thinkers from the eighteenth century downwards from Kierkegaard, Paul Tillich (d.1957) to Paulo Freire (d.1970) all having a range of distinct concerns about human existence and yet are not celebrated existentialists in the Sartrean ‘atheistic’ sense. Mentioning this, is to point out that Muslim educational practitioners must think deeply about the character and profile of their teaching and pedagogical practice. For instance, what underlying theories and approaches make up their *modus operandi* to teaching.

Much has been said about pedagogy, but what does use is it for cultivating authenticity? It requires approaching “the Islamic” as a mode of being-in-the-world itself with many visible cultural expressions of it at varying proximities to universally exemplary human ideals. It is not many Islams as some suggests, but one Islām as a life experience vis-à-vis the divine and multiple cultural



expressions of it – culture here being an umbrella term under which are the beliefs and practices of a people towards the sacred. Hence, religion is a multidimensional subset of all cultures vis-à-vis the sacred. The Quranic concept of *Dīn* equates the socio-cultural mode of being-in-the-world of which spiritual practice, language and everyday routines are a part of it. Pedagogy then, facilitates a dialogue or discourse between cultures. Concepts pertaining to the dialogical, intersubjective consciousness and discursive knowledge all suggest that authenticity is reflexive in nature combining autonomous subjective functioning and involving social relationships. It implies as well encounters with conflicting identities, interests, and ways of being involving cooperation and disagreement. Not only does the Quranic creation narratives indicate as such, when the Angels question God's wisdom for the creation of man that spread blood upon earth. It also reveals God's trust in Adam's capability (cf 2:32) to serve and care after his existential concerns (cf 51:56). It is in a similar sense Brentano and Husserl employs the meaning of authenticity as 'an intentional act that is fulfilled' (Trilling, 1972 and McManus, 2015). Martin Heidegger later deploys it to convey a mode of being of what it means to be human.

Given the aforementioned variables it should not be a mystery that the quest for authenticity and life's meanings occur during moments of angst or *fitan*; and Islam's sacred history is littered with such instances. Anxiety and anguish forces the mind to reflect inward and outward for meaning and answers. One reason why self-actualisation in old age is felt stronger than in youth as (Laceulle, 2018) study shows. As death and finality, which is of little concern in youth, surges to the forefront of attention, pedagogies for cultivating authenticity, must expose learners to the harsh realities of living and hope as well as destruction and death. Not as a single theme on their own but together; as the Quranic Revelation does using contrast in its narrative style juxtaposing rewards and punishments. In this regard deconstruction is an essential device of pedagogical practice highlighting the importance of constructivist teaching methods. But these teaching strategies should not be thought of as methods as such. The pedagogist, (Gert Biesta, 2009) examining Jacques Derrida's idea of deconstruction which is based upon the notion of

“Differance,” says it is not a methodology, but just something that occurs - as ‘quasi-transcendental’ – construed as conditions (*Aḥwāl*) for being and non-being. The word “condition” is significant. The point being that inspiration and insight does not follow a method, learning perhaps can be better described as the ‘AhHa’ moment – it just occurs. Derrida takes his idea of the Transcendent from Plato’s ‘Khôra’ in the *Timaeus* to be something just being there shapeless and formless outside of philosophy and human perception - indescribable. It is indifferent to any determination of it, viz, Sarmadī or beyond even the notion of transcendence, thus a metaphor for ‘Differance’ (Caputo, 1997a:93-97). An idea captured in the writings of Muḥyiddīn Ibn al-‘Arabi and Mullā Ṣadrā. So, whereas, transcendental philosophy aims to communicate conditions of possibility and leaves things there, deconstruction (differance) oscillates and dislocates it, bringing into focus the combination of conditions for possibility and impossibility (Biesta, 2009:3). About its relevance to facts, truth and education Biesta avers that deconstruction allows us ‘to witness’ its disclosure in action. Deconstruction is Derrida’s theories on reading (Caputo, 2018:121), one of which is that the reader recreates and reproduces meaning and is not just a receptor of it. In pedagogical practice, deconstruction at least of the Derridean kind is a way of understanding the first divine command of revelation: Read as Deconstruct! Cultivating conditions of authenticity learners must be taught ways of reading and decoding signs and deducing meaning (Manen M. v., 2007). Being-in-the-world provides conditions for just being-in as well as being-for-It. The first representing being-with-the-others (inauthentic time) and being-for-others (authentic or genuine time). Jacques Derrida’s (ca.1930-2004) concept of “Differance” questions the entire dualist distinction and develops what his interpolators such as John Caputo calls a ‘quasi-transcendentalist’ position. This means, that transcendence is neither immanence, nor the reverse, but both the condition of all possibility and impossibility as well - “quasitranscendental anteriority,” rather than one of ulteriority (Caputo, 1997b) – construed here in a specific intentional sense as conditions and moments of *being-with* (*al-Ma’ēyah*).

History as *being*, therefore reflects both phenomenological and

noumena readings together – deconstruction and construction. Not as separate entities or categories of meaning, but as a whole. Namely, the visible-invisible of human decisions and action towards the objects of existence (*al-Zāhir*), and the invisible-visible (*al-Bāṭin*) as the sense-data of perception. The Quranic Revelations attaches blame to readings of existence which are either wholly spiritual or solely secular (cf 30:7). Drawing upon the French existentialist phenomenological philosopher (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1968) reversibility thesis in “The Visible and The Invisible” challenges reducing history to visible events alone that diminish the chiasm or reversibility producing teleological ambiguity. No new knowledge can be borne to such conditions and leads to radical positivism and epistemological fascism. Thus, the terms invisible-visible and visible-invisible are invented to account for the reversibility of Being (*al-Shahādah*) as always accompanied by Non-Being or Absence (*al-Ghayb*). In this regard, (Bayraktar, 1996) explaining Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī’s views on ‘existence’ as twofold: that of Allah’s Existence and that of the created, adding that when both are treated as separate realms crisis arises once humans fail to surrender over themselves that Being (p.7).

In the context of history as being-in-the-world (spacetime), a shift in reading the historical past through sectarian lens and raw-realism, towards what the Qur’an describes as *Sunnatullāh* (divine or natural laws), corresponding to the idea of cyclical return *tadāwul al-Ayyām* (cf 3:140, 17:8). Not necessarily consequential to human transgression but as a test of faith and opportunities to surpass difficult horizons (*fitan*) for growth (cf 67:1-2). This offers a better reading of events and situations is important in the search for truth as the Qur’an states (cf 30:7).

Merleau-Ponty’s “*Reversibility Thesis*,” a corrective to his early work “The Phenomenology of Perception” does not only seek to further close the gap to squeeze out any dualism between mind and body, but to bring into focus the wholesomeness of Being. Namely, that the Other as alterity or difference is vital to interpretation (Daly, 2016). Reversibility is the idea that everything from mind-body, self-other selves, being and non-being are mutually and internally relational at the ontological (Ibid). At the most radical level, this

includes life and death, but most significantly in the Quranic worldview is that claim that service to the divine or the notion of *al-'Ibādah* mirrors serving creation.

The everyday encounters of living includes instances of existential death, viz inauthenticity or mere survival as well as authentic experiencing of genuine time, the Qur'an refers to as *al-Mā'ēyah* (being-with or being-for-Itself). Every student of Islam today should not be denied the study of early limit-situations or *al-fitān* in "Islamic" history – to which they are exposed in an age of mass media and popular historical drama television series. Instead, they must be made aware the distinction between moments within which it is possible for them to experience "genuine time" as well as "existential death" as part of their existentiality. Not in a simplistic sense of life here and overthere as in after-death in the afterlife, but rather that life and death occurring experiences both here and there as well. Moments and or limit-situations in this word therefore are opportunities for growth and not necessarily punishments – the punishment occurs as a result of persisting in wrong doing, thereby becoming habit. Amongst existentialist writers "existential death" amounts to situations of anxiety and personal calamities (Blattner 2006:149). Likewise the Quranic revelations often refer to such eventualities, as *Fitnah* (difficulty, cf: 21:35, 8:28,39), *Balā* (ordeal, cf:2:49, 37:101-106) and *'Idhā* (harm, cf:3:186, 14:12). In addition to which it refers to those not rising to the challenges as heartless; like cattle (cf 7:179, 25:44), deaf, dumb and blind (cf 2:171). The trials of living and dying is designed for testing the quality of one's deeds (cf 67:2), faith (29:1-3) and also for raising one's status to eternal memory. Such an understanding must not escape pedagogical practice and at the philosophical level it is best approached from Mullā Ṣaḍrā's idea of the primacy of Existence thesis, as definitive of an Islamic Existentialism – viz, of divine presence qua absence as the sacred – Existence itself.

An existentialist approach to education does not separate the prophet's existentiality, viz, his social and cultural surroundings and world as determinants of the language, images and content of revelation. It does not approach revelation as solely abstract intuition from the heavens without being anchored in existence as originary to

transcendence and immediate to immanence, because, existence, determines the human essence and spirit. It is intuitive grounded in existential concerns.

During the prophet's lifetime he faces many moments of existential dread (anguish and hopelessness) only to find the divine before him consoling and reassuring him. Those are the moments the Qur'an refers to as the days of Allah or Ayyāmullah (cf 3:140, 17:8). After his passing the community of believers led by Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq's did as well thrown into foreclosed situations beyond his reckoning and control within which he had to make decisive decisions whether to wage war against those refusing to pay taxes to the poor (*al-Zakāt*) as (Sallabi, 2012) recounts in his vivid depictions of the crisis at the time.

The upshot is that during the reign of the prophet's immediate leader-successors the believers movement was inundated with challenges to resolve. In retrospect, the extent to which those situations given to them could have been better managed demands an bird's eye existential approach. They should not however define the present, but be a source of learning from the past and human possibilities.

Nevertheless, the point being made here, is that when the Qur'an invites audiences to reflect upon the lived experiences of the past, it is not an invitation limited to the narratives of prophets and messengers. It is a call to learn from lived and current experiences. In that regard the diversity of proto-Shi'a and Sunni responses as well as the Qadirites (voluntarists); Jabrites (fatalists); Murji'ah, (determinists) and Khawārij (detractors) – so called – is better approached along existentialist readings as the outcomes of political decisions, resource management and not over 'religious dogma' as such, but were arguments expressed within the socio-cultural imagination and semiotics at the time. Later they developed to define epistemological and ontological discourses used by both public figures and leaders for justifying their competing stances. A reading of (Khadduri, 1984 and Judd, 1999) implies as such. For instance, In Khadduri's book, "The Islamic Conception of Justice" he mentions part of Mu'āwīyah's inauguration speech as a prologue to his discourse on determinism and justice used for quelling contestation

to his rule. In (Crone, 1986) review of Khadduri's work she criticises his account as having little value for failing to reference leading authorities on the issue. Her response depicts the irony mentioned here of maintaining control over public narratives.

To claim that there was a systemised entity, institution or ideology referred to as Islam in the prophet's lifetime and even during the reign of his early successors is a stretch of the imagination. It was more likely the case that it took shape into becoming a reified form during the reign 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (b.644-d.705) with the implementation of his "Islamization" program (Donner, 2012). Faced with endless attempts to legitimising their rule, from the early founding of the Umayyad Dynasty (ca.661), territorial expansion facilitated a type of economy made possible by forging alliances among Yamani tribes for defensive purposes as well as subduing internal insurrections. Along with those challenges were external threats from Byzantian forces and local Christians who saw an opportunity to exploit internal strife (Blankinship, 1994). Perhaps "hegemonisation" as explained in (Jackson, 1996) is a better term than Islamization. Nevertheless, at the time it entails the earliest rationalizing of social-cultural justification for held beliefs, values and norms relating to peace time and between warring entities (*Dārul Islām* and *Harb*).

Factors such as those, led to shift from experiential and *numinous* idea of the divine, albeit expressed within the socio-cultural imagination of its local audiences – some refer to it as a semitic monotheism (Nikiprowetzky, 1975) following the French Orientalist Ernest Renan (b.1823-d.1892) and a similar idea that Ismail Al-Faruqī upheld.

Donner's explanation of Prophet Muḥammad's movement as being "believers" oriented rather than a reified construct does not escape criticism from Patricia Crone 2019 article for the "Tablet" online magazine as conjecture and based only upon some Quranic statements. Donner's describes it as a "vague pre-Islamic monotheism" referred to as *Hanifism* (Donner, 2012:58).

Briefly, in the Quranic sense *Hanifism* is based upon universal consciousness of surrender to Transcendence (*al- 'Istislām*) expressed in culturally diverse ways. Contextual to reversibility this amounts to

resistance (*al-'Istilām*) against objectification immersed in everyday concerns and routines hindering submission to higher virtues and one's best nature (*al-Fiṭrah*) in the service of Allah. Ontologically Allah denotes '*al-M'abūd*' or 'The Sacred' sought by all human communities and represents all goodness and virtue towards creation and in particular the preservation of human dignity or *al-Karāmat al-Basharīyah* (cf 17:70). As (Shari'ati, 1979:116) so poignantly explains, that when Allah commands for instance loaning to Him a goodly loan it is referring to attending to His subjects' needs. In the Meccan society of Prophet Muḥammad, despite the presence of an imagined monolatrous relationship based upon tribal paganism towards "Originary Transcendence" or (*al-Muta'ālī*) – a term used by some Western existentialist (Segesvary, 2004). The Quranic Revelations managed to shift tribal consciousness away from the veneration of intermediates (*Shurakāā*) whether statues, idols, rabbis and priests by blaming them for hindering (*sadd*) free access and direct connection with the sacred in the human other and nature. It described such a relationship as Shirk alerting audiences that everyone were subjects under the sovereignty of a single divine presence (*'Ilāh*). Deviation away from such an awareness was depicted as *Ḍalālah* or going astray; delimiting one's identity to It to the exclusion of others was akin to fascism. Maintaining an insincere stance against *Tawḥīd* as concerns for a universal exemplary way of being-in-the-world (*Dīn*) after realizing its implication was defined as denial (*Kufr*) and hypocrisy (*Nifāq*). Like previous revelations before the Qur'an, its message remains universal, namely, that humanity emerged from single origins spreading across the earth and existing in culturally diverse ways and social organisations or *Sharā'e* (cf 2:148, 5:48). It recognises the cultural diversity of belief systems directed towards the sacred (Allah), however, its central message remains steadfast in its appeal towards Tawḥīd and moral goodness (*al-Iḥsān*) In the domain of ethics it reflected Mosaic and local customs and values in its worldview merging the Abrahamic-existential attitude with the Mosaic-local customs denoting universal solidarity before the sacred.

Such a reading comes closest to the meaning of *al-Fiṭrah* held by many early seventh century exegetes, such as Mujāhid ibn Jabr



(b.642-d.722), ‘Ikrimah (d.723) both students of ‘Abdullāh ibn Abbās, Qatādah ibn Di’āmah (d.735-6), Sa’ēd ibn Jubayr (b.665-d.714), according to Al-Ṭabari. The words “*no change will one find in the Khalq-al-Allah*” in chapter 30, verse 30 of the Quran on the matter was therefore understood to be an instinctive quality innate to humans (Al-Bīshē, 1996:28) and denotes a key component to the meaning of Dīn-Allah (God’s desired way of being-in-the-world). This idea endures beyond the seventh century on the lips of orthodox thinkers Ibn Abdul Barr (b.978-d.1071) Al-Qādī Abu Ya’lā (b.990-d.1066) and Ibn Taymīyah as well. The popular saying of Prophet Muḥammad, with the current author’s parenthesis conveys such an understanding.

“No child is born except on Al-Fiṭrah (innate disposition) but then his parents (social and cultural traditions and values) determine their Jewishness, Christianness or Zoroastrianness ... (social conditioning and being in the world)”

*Al-Fiṭrah* as a ‘human disposition’ is not debatable, but is an innate preparedness to act both autonomously and reflexively against societies’ objectifying projects, this must be part of pedagogical practice. *Al-Dīn al-Qayyum* vis-a-vis *al-Ḥanīf* (cf 30:30) denotes human excellence and functioning in the world (*al-Akhlāq al-Ḥamīdah*). Torn between the ego and alter ego and that of other selves, authentic functioning lies in the middle, namely acting equitable (bil Qist). The essays of Maslow (1943, 1964, 1971, 2018; Lawrence Kohlberg via McLeod 2013 and Erikson, *Childhood and Society* 1950, 68, 82) provides insights pertaining to adolescent psychology, human motivation and moral development.

The continuing tussel between individual-group interests with those of the collective (national, regional and global) combined is intrinsic to what Ferrara means by reflexive authenticity. In the context of identity formation, the model of (Marcia, 1988, 1966) based upon (Erikson 1950, 1968, 1982) development psychology theories, of the following four stages: “Foreclosure” which is the feeling of thrownness into facticity or social and cultural existence; “Diffusion” best described as “the escape into freedom” as the

beginning of determining one's identity (Bilsker, 1992:184-5); "Moratorium" the point where authenticity emerges as a self-actualising state and a sense of achievement. However, one must imagine that in the midst of such a process discontinuity and continues occur similar to the growth of nations as (Toynbee, 1946) avers. Bilsker, praises Marcia's model for clarifying difficult issues in Erikson's theory and enriching clinical understanding.

Islam, coupled with of resilience and resistance and not just 'submission is part of the Quranic worldview as well. There are clear contrasts in its narratives of likely tensions to occur between competing interests of the general populace (*al-Mustaḍ'afūn*) and their leaders (*al-Mal'a*). Power must be kept in check by lively and engaged democratic participation.

## Conclusion

In the age of civic society in which there are laws offering protections over peoples' rights to organise and express descent the 'subjectification' aspect of the Islamic curriculum in schools must incorporate civic participation studies relevant to adolescence. In addition to cultural components inclusive of traditional beliefs and rituals, the duties and responsibilities of good citizenship and governance must be included in the contemporary understanding of Fiqh. Tradition is significant to the meaning of authenticity (Laceulle, 2018:197). (Saeverot, 2013) following (Biesta, 2009) defines "Subjectification" as distinct from teaching for qualification and socialisation. The latter two have nothing to do with the spirit of the learner. Subjectification herein is a pedagogy of "self authoring" (cf 17:14 & 71) grounded in "genuine time" (cf 26:62, 16:128) for intentional authentic functioning. This by definition includes opportunities for *al-Ma'ēyah al-Khāṣah* (one's personal relationship with the divine); and *al-Āmah* (social engagement) as *'Ibādah* (service qua worship). Put concisely, pedagogies for subjectification are aimed at developing linear and vertical transcendence, states theologians have long noted (Tremelin, 2006:128). In (Sardella, 2016) a brief deconstruction of the components of the concept of transcendence is offered. Moreover, (Lace, Haberlein, & Handal, 2017) and (Reed, 1986) for instance offer measurements for its

presence in learners. Existentialism herein is a call for rebalancing approaches towards Islamic Education pedagogical practice from focusing upon the ontic as theology towards the philosophical incorporating human existential concerns.

## TRANSLITERATION TABLE

### CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR
ء	'	'	'	ز	z	z	z	گ	—	g	g
ب	b	b	b	ژ	—	—	ř	ل	l	l	l
پ	—	p	p	ژ	—	zh	j	م	m	m	m
ت	t	t	t	س	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n
ٹ	—	—	ṭ	ش	sh	sh	ş	ه	h	h	h <sup>1</sup>
ث	th	th	th	ص	ş	ş	ş	و	w	v/u	v
ج	j	j	c	ض	ḍ	ḍ	ḍ	ی	y	y	y
چ	—	ch	çh	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ة	-ah	—	-a <sup>2</sup>
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ال	al <sup>3</sup>	—	—
خ	kh	kh	kh	ع	'	'	'	<sup>1</sup> – when not final <sup>2</sup> – at in construct state <sup>3</sup> – (article) al - or l-			
د	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	ğh				
ڈ	—	—	d	ف	f	f	f				
ذ	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	q	q				
ر	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	k			

### VOWELS

		Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	Ā	—
	و	ū	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī	ī
Doubled	ي	iiy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)	iiy (final form ī)
	و	uww (final form ū)	uv	uvv
		uvv (for Persian)		
Diphthongs	و	au or aw	au	ev
	ی	ai or ay	ay	ey
Short	ا	a	a	a or e
	u	u	u	u or ū
	ی	i	i	o or ö
	ی	i	i	ī

### URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. چھ jh گھ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

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