

Islam and Democracy

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Abstract: This paper proposes a short apprehension of the reflections of one of the most important progressive Islamic scholars, the Egyptian theologian Ali Abderraziq. It focuses on his work about Islam and the Fundamentals of Power, published in 1925. The main purpose is to allow a more sophisticated view of Islamic political thought and to show that there are roots and possibilities for an endogen democratic evolution and secularization progress coming from within Islamic dogma.

Resumen: Este artículo propone una lectura de las reflexiones de uno de los eruditos islámicos progresistas más importantes, el teólogo egipcio Ali Abderraziq. Se centra en sus estudios sobre El Islam y los fundamentos del poder, publicado en 1925. El objetivo principal del artículo es ofrecer una visión más sofisticada del pensamiento político islámico y mostrar que es posible un proceso de evolución democrática endógeno y de secularización desde dentro del dogma islámico.

1. INTRODUCTION

Islam has certainly become a main issue in today's world politics. Religion in general cannot deny political components, tendencies and impacts. There has always been an interconnected relationship between the two fields of human social action with an interchanging predominance of each, driven very far sometimes, even as far as a complete absorption of one by the other. Islam, as a matter of fact, has become the most politically relevant religion in the last few years. At the first sight, it seems to have operated at the same time as a modern ideology, able to unite social movements against western domination, and as an archaic construction reducing its adherents to a state of underdevelopment and *barbarie* (as under the Taliban regime). It is our duty and ethical responsibility as Western scholars to fight against the propagandist, caricaturist mode in which Islam is treated for political purposes by our Western representatives of power-politics and economic and military imperialism. Most analyses of Islam cannot avoid a tendency of cultural essentialism, on one hand, or, on the other, of a marxist or materialist historical determinism and evolutionism. The first denies Islam its capacity for change. After conceptualizing an ideal type, the essentialists try to reduce the whole Islamic world and history to their own construction. Islam is visualized as having one and the same impact *wherever* and *whenever* it meets *whatever* society. These theoretical foundations formed the main structure for maintenance of a bipolar system in international relations. Instead of the communist-capitalist paradigm, the new enemy of democratic, industrialized and capitalist West seems to be the underdeveloped, Human Rights challenging and, last but not least, Islamic East. Edward Said correctly questions the end of imperialism and underlines the continuation of Orientalism in the think tanks of the United States and namely in the theories of Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami.¹

The materialist, Marxist and the general evolutionist perspective are criticized for being implicitly orientalist or eurocentric. Sami Zubaida therefore wants to demonstrate the uselessness of class perspective for the right apprehension of the Islamic Revolution in

¹ Said, E., "Preface to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition", in *Orientalism*, Vintage Books Edition, New York, 1994.

Iran. The *bazaaris* and the clergy can in no way be described as two homogeneous classes with the same economical background and interests neither in Marx's nor in Weber's definition of class. These social groups were not unified political actors on which the revolution could count. The configuration of their cohesion was a political event as such. It cannot be taken as pre-established.

A third point of view is what in Anthropology is called the *good savage theory*. In today's Islam-studies it is possible to recognize it in two different ways: The first is the definition of Islam as an absolutely new phenomenon which has no counterpart to compare with. In this line of thinking, Islam is a philosophy, religion, social organization and ethical system fallen from heaven completely isolated from its historical, social and political context. The second approach consists in the little objective admiration of Islam as something much better than our Western religious configurations. In my opinion the best way of analyzing Islam is Weber's comprehensive sociology. As a matter of fact, without mentioning the German sociologist, Hamid Enayat², Charles Kurzman³ and others adopt this all-comprehensive mode of research which has the virtue of including the Muslim point of view as well. In this paper, dedicated to Islam and Democracy, we will give voice to the early Islamic modernist, Ali Abderraziq⁴ and his view of Islam and government.

2. BRIEF APPREHENSION OF THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF ABDERRAZIQ'S REFLECTIONS

Modern Islamic political thought experienced a violent impact, which tore it immediately down from heaven to earth, when in 1924 the ottoman Caliphate was abolished by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. During the 19th century, according to Charles Kurzman's

² Enayat, H., *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, The Macmillian Press LTD, London & Basingstoke, 1982.

³ Kurzman, Ch. (ed.), *Liberal Islam*, Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1998.

⁴ I am writing his name following Filali-Ansary's french translation. Other transcriptions are: Ali Abd ar-Raziq or Ali Abd al-Raziq (as in Kurzman's collection and Enayat's commentary I have already cited).

research and denomination, three schools of Islamic intellectualism developed. In the first place the one of *Customary Islam*, related to popular rites, mysticism and practices, in the second place *Revivalist Islam*, best known now-a-days as *Islamism* or *Fundamentalism*, and in the last place, *Liberal Islam*. The disappearance of the main symbolical religious-political institution of their religion, was approved as a great shock among Islamic scholars. Questions arose about the necessity and correctness in religious terms of the Caliphate. One position claimed for abolition, another, following Rashid Rida's theories⁵, began to believe in the advantages of the construction of an Islamic State. The theology Professor of the Egyptian University of Al-Azhar and judge of the religious Court, Ali Abderraziq (1888-1966), inscribed himself among the first party of scholars with his reflection on the Caliphate, its nature, status, social function and history, published in 1925, under the title "*Al-islam wa uçul al-hukm: bahth fi al-khilafa wa al-hukuma fi al-ilsam*" ("Islam and the Fundamentals of Government"). Abdou Filali-Ansary⁶ who translated "Islam and the Fundamentals of Government" into French states that Abderraziq is the first Muslim scholar to claim an inherent laicism of Islam. His thesis are based on Muslim holy texts, the Koran and *Hadith*, and the medieval Islamic Philosophers, such as Ibn Khaldun about who's work Abderraziq had written a thesis at the end of his studies in Political Sciences and Economics in the UK. His family had been involved in politics since his father (Hassan Pacha Abderraziq) had participated in the foundation of the "*Umma*"-Party in 1907⁷. They were also in direct contact with the revivalist thinker Muhammad 'Abduh. His brother, Mostafa, was trained at the traditionalist Al-Azhar University before completing his studies in France. Mostafa later combined his work as minister of religious issues, during several intervals between 1938 y 1946, with his activities as a lecturer in modern philosophy at the Al-Azhar University and ended up being Dean of the same academic institution. Ali received his intellectual instruction, still in his home-country, not only at Al-Azhar but also at the new National University, inaugurated in 1908. His reflections on the Caliphate met an immense

⁵ Rida, R., *The Caliphate of the Supreme Imamate*, (Al-khilafah aw'al-imamat 'al-uzma), El Cairo, 1922-23.

⁶ Filali-Ansary, A., *L'Islam est-il hostile á la laïcité?*, Actes Sud, France, 2002.

disapproval among traditionalists, the Egyptian monarchs (who aspired to the succession of the drained Turkish Caliphate) and liberals of the “*Wafd*”-Party. Ali Abderraziq had to defend himself before the University Counsel which cancelled his title as *‘alim* (lecturer in theology and Islamic Law). After being rehabilitated in 1947, Ali participated in government until the Revolution.

3. ISLAM AND THE FUNDAMENTALS OF POWER

Abderraziq’s essay is divided in a symmetrical mode in three books, according to Spinoza’s and Wittgenstein’s logic. The first part treats the “Caliphate and Islam”, the second is dedicated to “Islam and Government” and the last is about the “Caliphate and Government in History”.

In the first book, after having made some philological statements on the terms of “Caliph” and “Caliphate”, Abderraziq exposes the two main theories on the origin of authority of the Caliphate: the first wants power to derive directly from God. The Caliph is therefore God’s representative on earth.⁸ For certain Muslims the Caliph became a kind of divine incarnation or even a divinity on earth. The second theory about the source of power follows the hypothesis of a delegation of responsibilities coming from the people, from the *umma* to the Caliph.⁹ Abderraziq states that the “memorial on the Caliphate and Power” published by the Grand National Assembly of Ankara defends exactly this point of view. He goes on to explain that the need for justification of the origins of power has not been exclusively Islamic but has its exact parallels in Western thinking and the two lines of argument are to be found in the reflections of Hobbes and Locke.

After having stressed the two reasons of legitimization of power in general, Abderraziq states that there are also two arguments which justify the institution of the Caliphate as *the* Islamic institution *par*

⁸ Abderraziq cites Ibn Khaldun, Al-Baydawi, Al-Farazdaq, Tarihi, Al-Katibi y Abd al-Hakim al-Sialakuti as representatives of this hypothesis.

⁹ The author quotes Al-Hotei’a, Al-Kasani as followers of this school.

excellence: the first defines the Caliphate as a political organization directly required by the religious dogma, and the second requires the Caliphate to be the only possible political organization able to protect the correct Muslim religious life style.

Abderraziq replies the followers of the model of the Caliphate as a religious institution that there is absolutely no evidence supporting their vindication neither in the Koran nor in the Prophet's tradition. To make his explanation more evident, the Islamic scholar uses a comparative method of theological exegesis on the purpose to gain more objectivity. Therefore, he argues that *Jesus Christ evoked Cesar's government and commanded to give Cesar what belongs to Cesar. Nevertheless [this statement] does not lead to the recognition by Jesus Christ to Cesar's government of a base in the Law inspired by God. This does not imply that the recognition of this government forms part of the Christian belief. [...] The Prophet's Hadith where you can see the allusions to the terms of Caliphate, Imamate and allegiance do not mean anything more than Christ wanted to say when he evoked certain dispositions of the religious Law [how to respond] to government.*¹⁰ Abderraziq continues his exposition by arguing that by proposing rules for their relationship with pagan peoples, the Prophet did not regularise paganism. Neither does the claim for submission under specific conjectural circumstances to a tyrant rise tyranny as a religiously legitimized political organization. The same argument is valid for the Prophet's rules of generosity with the poor, treatment of slaves, handling of divorce, commerce and loan: the single existence of such rules does not transform mendacity, slavery, divorce, commerce and loan in religious phenomena.

Ibn Khaldun argued that the Caliphate as a true religious institution had disappeared after Ali's death and that henceforth

¹⁰ Jésus-Christ a évoqué le gouvernement de César, et a ordonné de rendre à César ce qui est de César. Il n'en découle pas pour autant que Jésus reconnaissait au gouvernement de César un fondement dans la loi inspirée de Dieu. Il n'en découle pas que la reconnaissance de ce gouvernement fait partie des croyances chrétiennes. [...] Les hadith du Prophète où l'on voit des allusions aux notions du califat, d'imamat, d'allégeance, ne signifient rien de plus que ce que le Christ a voulu dire lorsqu'il a évoqué certaines dispositions de la loi religieuse vis-à-vis du gouvernement de César. (Abderraziq, A. (1925), *L'islam et les fondements du pouvoir*, Filali-Ansary, A. (trad.), Éditions la Découverte, Paris, 1994, pag. 69-70).

monarchy was a government based upon and executed by force. Abderraziq concludes, after recalling Khaldun's point of view, that Islam is a practical religion which does not allow tyranny: [...] *islam is a religion which was not satisfied with teaching the ideal of fraternity and equality to its adepts, with inculcating them the doctrine for which men are equal "as the teeth of the comb", that their slaves are at the same time their brothers in religion, that believers are allied the ones with the others... No! Islam did not cling to a theoretical and isolated education of its doctrine. On the contrary, it [Islam] trained its believers to make use of them [Islamic principals] in their everyday life, it educated and exercised them to strictly observe them in their activities. It proposed to them rights based on fraternity and equality, it proved them [these rights] within real circumstances and demonstrated the consequences of their validity. They have acquired a lively perception of fraternity and an intensely lived feeling of equality.*¹¹ This is the reason why Abderraziq concludes that the Caliphate was an institution alien to the Islamic religion and made up by power even against Islamic ethic. It is therefore impossible to extract any justification for the Caliphate from Islamic doctrine.

The second argument that claims the necessity of the Caliphate insists on it being absolutely vital for the guarantee of a correct Muslim lifestyle. Abderraziq pronounces himself as a strict follower of the Contractualists' theory of the indispensability of a government for whatever society. If the theologians, claiming the importance of the Caliphate, were thinking of the necessity of government for the administration and leadership of a society in an abstract way, Abderraziq would undoubtedly agree. In this case, "Caliphate" would be a synonym of "government" and could adopt whatever form

¹¹ [...] l'islam est une religion que ne s'est pas contentée d'enseigner à ses adeptes l'idéal de la fraternité et de l'égalité, de leur inculquer la doctrine selon laquelle les hommes sont égaux "comme les dents du peigne", que leurs esclaves sont en même temps leurs frères en religion, que les croyants sont alliés les uns aux autres... Non! L'islam ne s'est pas tenu à un enseignement théorique et détaché de ces principes. Au contraire, il a entraîné les fidèles à les appliquer dans leur vie de tous les jours, les a éduqués et exercés à les observer strictement dans leurs activités. Il a posé pour eux des lois fondées sur la fraternité et l'égalité, les a éprouvés dans des circonstances réelles et leur a fait voir les conséquences de leur mise en oeuvre. Ils en ont tiré une perception vive de la fraternité et un sentiment intensément vécu de l'égalité. (Abderraziq, A. (1925), *L'islam et les fondements du pouvoir*, Filali-Ansary, A. (trad.), Éditions la Découverte, Paris, 1994, pp. 76-77).

reaching from democracy to dictatorship. Nevertheless, scholars usually refer to “Caliphate” as *the* historical political institution dominant in the Arabic World and, following this argument, Abderraziq refuses to accept that this mode of political organization is indispensable for the survival of the Muslim community. As a matter of fact, it is an essentialist error to claim that the Caliphate has been one and the same since the death of Mohammed in 632. The most contemporary version of the Caliphate had just been abolished when Abderraziq was bringing his reflections to paper and this did not provoke a shift in Muslim belief. It is interesting to put forward that Abderraziq thought it to be possible, on the one hand, to unify the whole of humanity under the same religion but, on the other hand, he found it completely utopian to pretend a universal government of all Nations: *it is conceivable that humanity can be unified within the same religion and that it constitutes in this way a single religious community. Although pretending to submit the whole earth to one single government, to unite it within one and the same political entity, this seems nearly strange to human nature and can not be related with divine prevision.*¹² Men are different and it is natural that they govern their activities in harmony with their dissimilarities. God, concludes Abderraziq, decided to leave to the humans the responsibility to govern themselves. Abderraziq’s perception of human inequality might sound contradictory at this point to his statement of equality as a basic element of the Islamic dogma. This confusion happens because of the already cited undistinguished use of the term Islam to describe a socio-historical reality or an ethical-religious system of metaphysical belief. Abderraziq does not fail to notice this point of misunderstanding. We therefore have to clarify that for Abderraziq, Islam as a religious dogma inspires clearly a democratic ethic: men are equal before God. Nevertheless, these equal souls are born as unequal humans within very different cultural and historical circumstances. This is the reason why they had and are still having diverse forms of government.

¹² *Il est concevable que l’humanité puisse être unifiée au sein d’une même religion et qu’elle constitue ainsi une seule communauté religieuse. Quant à vouloir soumettre toute la terre à un seul gouvernement, à la rassembler en une seule et même entité politique, cela semble presque étranger à la nature humaine et ne peut être lié à la volonté divine.* (Abderraziq, A. (1925), *L’islam et les fondements du pouvoir*, Filali-Ansary, A. (trad.), Éditions la Découverte, Paris, 1994, pag. 128).

Nonetheless, Islam as a religious composition does preferably call for a democratic system.

Abderraziq starts his second book in a very unorthodox way of thinking. His analysis turns around the interrogation whether the Prophet was only a Prophet or at the same time a King. He states that this mode of asking cannot be considered heretic because it does not question the religious mission of the Prophet as such. Abderraziq finds it completely obvious that there exists an urgent necessity to throw more light on the structure of Mohammed's original community as most of Islamic scholars interpret even this community as the ideal model for all Muslim societies. This is the reason why it is important to extract the concrete functions of Mohammed within his community. Abderraziq starts defining two different types of prophets: on the one hand, there is God's messenger who has no other mission than to transmit the divine message to his people. As a clear representative of this form of pure prophecy Abderraziq alleges Jesus. On the other hand, there were prophets who were in charge, besides their task as God's delegates, of other administrative occupations, as for example Joseph at the Pharaoh's Court. Abderraziq states that most Muslims, with or without academic training, are convinced of Mohammed as belonging to the second type. Nevertheless, there is scarce material to describe in a scientifically satisfactory manner Mohammed's community. For Abderraziq there are two explanations of this documentary hole. The first of them wants all items of proof to be lost. The second argues that Mohammed's community has been so pure and innocent and therefore so simple that sophisticated institutions and their descriptions never existed. Abderraziq agrees that the first Muslim community did not develop any characteristic such as those which political scientists do observe in modern state structures. One of the most important occupations of the Medinan community was holy war. Was holy war a religious activity? Abderraziq denies this possibility because, according to the Koran and *Hadith*, God did not order a forced conversion of pagans. It cannot be denied hence that Mohammed, by leading the holy war, was handling a not entirely religious task. Abderraziq puts forward that God's messenger necessarily needs a special social level, an integer moral, an extraordinary beauty, an impressive physical constitution, an

exemplary sensibility and a huge capacity for uniting people and convince them to follow the divine commandments. The charismatic faculties of a Prophet have to go much further than those of a pure institutional political leader or a family father. By using the examples of the political leader and the family father Abderraziq states implicitly that the reason which legitimates the Prophet's authority must be even stronger than institutional recognition or clan ties. The Prophet can take up secular responsibilities without losing his additional extraordinary capabilities. God's messenger shares a profound connection with the hearts and the most intimate part of the human soul. He reaches the source of love and hate and reads men's thoughts. Responsibility over all issues of this world and the next lies in this exemplary person's hands. Mohammed's message is perceived as different from the one of his predecessors because it is directed to the entire humanity and it is conceived as the seal of prophecy, the last and definite revelation. In Muslim faith, God's message was transmitted completely by Mohammed as a perfect union of belief and rites to the one and only God. Mohammed was, therefore, the prophet with the largest faculties of all of God's messengers. Abderraziq insists again in the importance of the difference between the two types of power: *the power which a prophet exercises on his people is of a spiritual nature and derives from faith that it acquires from the hearts. Submission to this power is perfectly honest and induces the submission of the body. The power of the prince, [on the other hand], is of a material nature: it reaches the submission of the body without having established any contact with the hearts. The first focuses on guiding men on the right way and on initiating them to the Truth, the second concentrates on the administration of the vital services of the community and on the occupation of land. One seeks to establish religion, the other to serve the interests of the world. One is directed to God, the other to men. One is a spiritual and religious guide, the other is a pure secular labour. How much are they distant the one from the other! What distance between politics and religion.*¹³ Abderraziq finally concludes that

¹³ *Le pouvoir qu'un prophète exerce sur son peuple est de nature spirituelle et naît de la foi qu'il acquiert dans les coeurs. La soumission à ce pouvoir est parfaitement sincère et entraîne la soumission des corps. Le pouvoir du prince, lui, est de nature matérielle; il aboutit à la soumission du corps sans qu'aucun contact soit établi avec les coeurs. Le premier vise à diriger les hommes dans la voie juste et à les initier au Vrai, le second porte sur la gestion des services vitaux de la communauté et sur l'occupation des terres. L'un cherche à établir la religion, l'autre à servir les intérêts de ce monde. L'un est dirigé vers Dieu, l'autre vers les*

Mohammed's message was purely religious and cannot be mixed up with his activities as a secular leader. His civil and political work was not transmitted to him directly from God. He organised his community in a more or less democratic form within the society of his time and asked his followers on advice. If his political leadership had been divinely inspired he would not have had to consult with anybody.

Abderraziq initiates his third and last book of the essay by claiming that Islam is not an Arabian but a universal religion. God had chosen an Arabian Messenger and it is therefore reasonable that the transmission of the religious dogma to him was held in Arabic and reached the Arabian people in the first place. Nevertheless, the Muslim message has clear universal characteristics and cannot be restricted to the Arab World. The Arabian peoples, even after having converted to Islam, continued to be separated into different political unities. After the short union during Mohammed's life the community fought about the succession of the Prophet in his tasks as a political and religious administrator. The disagreement between the followers of Mohammed at the moment of the election of a new leader did not run parallel with the refusal of the religion by the adversaries of Abu Bakr. It is true that the first occupation of the Caliph Abu Bakr consisted in fighting against apostasy. Nevertheless, Abderraziq claims that the later wars were not all struggles against apostasy anymore, but that this denomination was maintained due to pure propagandistic reasons. It is evident therefore that religion survived the whole political division. After the Prophet's death, what remained was a religious community divided in a multiplicity of different political organizations. With the instauration of the Caliphate, Arabian invented a real Arabian state which had nothing to do with religious belief as such. The Arabian state surely built on a religious base with the goal to defend God's message that had been transmitted by Mohammed. Nobody denies the immense influences this state had on the predication and extension of the new religion. It nevertheless

hommes. L'un est direction spirituelle et religieuse, l'autre oeuvre purement séculière. Combien sont-ils éloignés l'un de l'autre! Que de distance entre politique et religion! (Abderraziq, A. (1925), *L'islam et les fondements du pouvoir*, Filali-Ansary, A. (trad.), Éditions la Découverte, Paris, 1994, pag. 119).

remained an Arabian state useful to the purpose of the extension and maintenance of the Arabian dominance. As a matter of fact, *neither Abu Bakr nor any of the other members of the elite claimed that the post of the leader of Muslims constituted a religious dignity and never considered disobedience as a rejection of religion.*¹⁴

Abderraziq concludes that the title “Caliph” (“successor and vicar of the Prophet”) and the historical circumstances which had brand-marked its use, caused the confusion of Muslims who ended up by identifying the Caliphate as a religious institution. *The institution that Muslims have agreed on calling “Caliphate” is in fact completely strange to their religion, in the same way as the honours, the strength, the attractions and intimidations by which it is surrounded.*¹⁵ This is the reason why there is no religious concept that unchangeably hinders Muslims of competing with the other nations in all social and political sciences. Nothing forbids them to destroy a system out of use which has thrown them back and slept them under its fist. Nothing stays in their way to construct their state and their system of government on the foundation of the latest creations of human mind and on the base of systems whose stability has been proven, those which the experience of the nations have named as among the best.¹⁶

4. CONCLUSION

We will start the conclusion with Hamid Enayat’s critique of modern Islamic political thought. He firstly pronounces himself to be uneasy about the lack of a universally accepted definition of democracy and claims that such is impossible to be found in modern Islamic essays on

¹⁴ Ni Abou Bakr, ni aucun autre membre de l’élite n’a prétendu que la fonction de chef des musulmans constituait une dignité religieuse, et n’a jamais considéré la désobéissance comme un rejet de la religion. (Abderraziq, A. (1925), *L’islam et les fondements du pouvoir*, Filali-Ansary, A. (trad.), Éditions la Découverte, Paris, 1994, pag. 146).

¹⁵ En vérité, cette institution que les musulmans ont convenu d’appeler califat est entièrement étrangère à leur religion, tout comme les honneurs, la puissance, les attraites et l’intimidation dont elle a été entourée. (Abderraziq, A. (1925), *L’islam et les fondements du pouvoir*, Filali-Ansary, A. (trad.), Éditions la Découverte, Paris, 1994, pag. 155).

¹⁶ Aucun principe religieux n’interdit aux musulmans de concurrencer les autres nations dans toutes les sciences sociales et politiques. Rien ne leur interdit de détruire ce système désuet qui les a avilis et les a endormis sous sa poigne. Rien ne les empêche d’édifier leur État et leur système de gouvernement sur la base des dernières créations de la raison humaine et sur la base des systèmes dont la solidité a été prouvée, ceux que l’expérience des nations a désignés comme étant parmi les meilleurs. (Abderraziq, A. (1925), *L’islam et les fondements du pouvoir*, Filali-Ansary, A. (trad.), Éditions la Découverte, Paris, 1994, pag. 156).

political subjects neither in general terms, nor in a specifically Western formulation. Secondly, he states that modern Islamic scholars fail to develop a theory of Islamic democracy and that they usually reduce their studies to a mere translation of democratic concepts to an Islamic language. And finally he observes that they are not able to adapt neither the ethical and legal precepts nor the attitudes and institutions of traditional society to democracy. Enayat concludes that *it is because of this neglect that the hopes of evolving a coherent theory of democracy appropriate to an Islamic context have remained largely unfulfilled. Perhaps the neglect is deliberate or unavoidable, because [...] all efforts to synthesise Islam and democracy are bound to founder on the bedrock of that body of eternal and unchangeable doctrines which form the quintessence of every religion.*¹⁷

It is certainly true that there is no large definition of democracy in Abderraziq's "Islam and the Fundamentals of Power". Nonetheless, he clearly shows that democracy as a specific form of government (in contrast with the Caliphate) can not only be conciliated with Islam but is the one most according to its dogma. This is certainly a starting point for further research. Regrettably, not only at the time of Abderraziq's trial before the University Counsel of Al-Azhar, but until the present day, political, economical and social historical facts are true obstacles even to theoretical conceptualization of democracy in Islamic states. Abderraziq's trial recalls to us the one of Galileo Galilei but unfortunately without the latter crying out: "*eppur si muove*". We might therefore conclude with Enayat that no religious dogma, claiming universal and eternal truth, can be conciliated with democracy but this not the subject of this paper. Therefore, we can at least affirm that Islam is not in greater proportion contradictory to democratic principles than Christianity. Abderraziq also shows that Islam can be perfectly combined with a laic state and this is probably the best institutional guarantee, developed to the present day, of tolerance and of individual and collective rights.

¹⁷ Enayat, H., *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, The Macmillian Press LTD, London & Basingstoke, 1982, pag. 135.

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