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The epistemological lesson in contemporary Arab thought

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Abstract---The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that Arab philosophical thought, whether the Western or the Eastern Arab world, responds to the necessity of engagement in epistemological inquiry despite differences in its referential frameworks, foundations, and objectives. This engagement falls within a critical project that bears an Arab imprint on scientific knowledge through diverse intellectual approaches and conceptualizations. Although it often emulates Western thought, laden with ideological presuppositions, it nonetheless articulates a philosophical vision that mobilizes the contemporary epistemic apparatus to reread Arab heritage, long resistant to critique and analysis. These are, therefore, critical intellectual projects in the process of formation and consolidation, which require an in-depth and grounded reading, given the richness of this field in concepts and procedural tools. This, in turn, underscores the paramount importance of epistemological inquiry for the Arab intellect.

Keywords---Epistemological inquiry, Arab thought, intellectual references, critical approaches, contemporary thought.

ملخـــــــص:
أن الغرض من هذه الدراسة يتمثل في ابراز أن الفكر الفلسفي العربي يستجيب الى ضرورة اندماج في البحث الابستمولوجي، سواء من جانبه المغاربي، أو المشرقي على الرغم من اختلاف منطلقاته المرجعية وأسسه وغاياته، يندرج ضمن المشروع النقدي ببصمة عربية للمعرفة العلمية ضمن مقاربات وتصورات فكرية، برغم من محاكاته للفكر الغربي المثقل بحمولاته الايديولوجية، إلا أنه يعبر عن رؤية فلسفية تستثمر هذا جهاز المعرفي المعاصر في قراءة التراث العربي الذي ظل عصيا عن النقد والتحليل، هي إذا مشاريع فكرية نقدية قيد تشكل والانصهار استوجبت قراءة متأصلة، نظرا لما يزخر به هذا المجال من مفاهيم وادوات نظرية وإجرائية تأكيدا على ما يكتسيه الدرس الابستمولوجي من أهمية بالغة للعقل العربي.

الكلمات المفتاحية:
الدرس الأبستمولوجي -الفكر العربي – المرجعيات الفكرية – مقاربات نقدية- الفكر العاصر -

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Introduction

Epistemological discourse is considered one of the most vital, dynamic, and prominent philosophical fields within the contemporary cognitive transformation, distinguished by seriousness and richness, particularly as it is closely linked to the scientific domain, which is characterized by rapid and successive developments marked by precise and complex discoveries. In this context, it has become imperative for Arab thought to engage with and explore this field as a civilizational requirement representing a scientific and cultural challenge. Within this framework, the Arab philosophical–epistemological approach has adopted various stances toward this discourse, whether through reception or emulation, seeking thereby to articulate a vision and conceptualization rooted in the Arab intellectual heritage within epistemological studies.

Regardless of the differences in intellectual and methodological orientations among its pioneers, the common thread uniting them undoubtedly lies in their renewed and profound assimilation of the latest contemporary European intellectual theories, which they deploy to reveal points of divergence and distinction vis-à-vis the Western Other. This preoccupation has proven vibrant and productive, conferring upon Arab rationality a role that, if one may say so, transcends the epistemological rupture that occurred with our rich heritage. It has contributed to the crystallization of a critical vision through which the crisis and inadequacy of modern Arab thought were diagnosed, and through which attempts were made to dismantle this impasse and confront the scientific backwardness that has burdened Arab societies.

Among the most prominent figures in this regard are, by way of example, Muhammad Abed al-Jabri, Zaki Najib Mahmoud, and Muhammad ThabitAfandi, who played a significant role in enriching a debate fundamentally connected to the concerns of the Arab intellectual reality. Their work was characterized by a drive toward grounding and probing the essence of the epistemological obstacle that has beset the structure of the Arab mind, past and present alike. In light of the foregoing, the central problem of this article revolves around the question of how Arab thought has drawn inspiration from epistemological thought, and what constitute its core areas of concern

Terminology and Concepts:

1. The Concept of Epistemology:

The term *epistemology* is a relatively recent coinage, introduced by James Frederick Ferrier (1808–1864) in his philosophical work *Institutes of Metaphysics*, published in 1854. Its usage in the French intellectual context emerged with the philosopher Bertrand Russell through his translation of an article on the foundations of geometry in 1901, after which the term came into wider circulation[1]With ÉmileMeyerson, this term came to acquire a meaning parallel to that of the philosophy of science.[2] Epistemology is thus one of the fields of study that takes knowledge as its primary object, and the widespread use of this term is indicative of the emergence of new theories that necessitated making knowledge itself the subject of a distinct scientific discipline.[3]

In Lalande's*Dictionary*, under the entry Epistemology (*épistémologie*), it is stated that the term *epistemology* has been, and in the view of some authors continues to be, used to denote the philosophy of science.[4] However, in a more precise sense, it is neither a synthetic construction nor a speculative anticipation of scientific laws in the manner of positivism or evolutionism. Rather, in its essence, epistemology is a

[1] Bouchaïr, Abdelaziz. *Articles on Epistemological Inquiry: Philosophical Questionings in the Micro and Macro Worlds*. Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, 1st ed., Algiers, p. 45.
[2] Bouchaïr, Abdelaziz.*Op. cit.*, p. 45.
[3] Waqidi, Mohammed. *What Is Epistemology?* Dar Al-Hadatha, 1st ed., Beirut, 1983, p. 10.
[4] Abdelkader, Maher Mohammed. *Philosophy of Science: An Arab Reading*, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

critical study of the principles, hypotheses, and results of the various sciences, aiming to determine their logical origins, validity, and objective scope.

Accordingly, a distinction must be drawn between epistemology and the theory of knowledge, even though epistemology constitutes an essential entry point to, and an indispensable aid for, the latter. Epistemology thus differs from the theory of knowledge in that it examines knowledge in detail and *a posterior* across the various sciences and domains, rather than addressing it at the level of the unity of thought as a whole.[5]

Lalande's initial definition points to the correspondence between epistemology and the newer term, *philosophy of science*. This perspective was adopted by JamilSaliba, who maintains that epistemology essentially denotes the theory of science or philosophy of science, understood as the study of the principles, hypotheses, and results of the sciences, a critical examination aimed at revealing their logical origin and objective value.

Saliba further distinguishes between the study of scientific methods and epistemology, noting that the former is a branch of applied logic. He also states: "We distinguish between epistemology and the theory of knowledge (*théorie de la connaissance*), even though the former constitutes a necessary entry point to the latter. This is because epistemology does not investigate knowledge in terms of its unity of thought, as in the theory of knowledge, but rather examines knowledge *a posteriori*, in a detailed manner, across the sciences and their respective domains."[6]

In the *Philosophical Dictionary* published by the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo, under the entry *Epistemology*, it is stated that epistemology is a critical study of the principles, hypotheses, and results of the various sciences, aiming to determine their logical origin and objective value. This aligns the first aspect of the definition with Lalande's position.

In the second aspect, the dictionary notes that the English approach equates the concept of epistemology with the theory of knowledge in general, meaning that epistemology is considered a branch of philosophy concerned with the origin, formation, methods, and validity of knowledge.[7] This distinction is also highlighted in Saliba's dictionary, which differentiates between two approaches: the English approach, which equates epistemology with the theory of knowledge, and the French approach, which equates epistemology with the philosophy of science.[8]

Contrary to other definitions, the *Oxford Dictionary* defines the term *epistemology* in a way that differs from those found in other dictionaries, considering it as the theory of method, the science of method, or the study of the foundations of knowledge in terms of its source, methodology, nature, value, and limits.[9]

However, the definition that serves as the reference point in our study is that proposed by Dr. Muhammad Abed al-Jabri. He poses the following question: *What exactly is epistemology?*and answers:"It encompasses all those cognitive inquiries viewed from a contemporary perspective, that is, through the current stage of the development of philosophical scientific thought. Epistemology is knowledge, and since knowledge is a relation between the knowing subject and the object to be known"[10]

Epistemology is the 'science' concerned with studying this relationship. This relationship acts as a bridge connecting the subject to the object and the object to the subject, a bridge that creates the

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[5] Lalande, André. *Lalande'sPhilosophicalEncyclopedia*. 2nd ed.,Aouidat Publications, Beirut, 2001, pp. 356–357.
[6] Saliba, Jamil. *Philosophical Dictionary*, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
[7] Madkour, Ibrahim.*(Foreword)* in *Philosophical Dictionary*, General Authority for State Printing, Cairo, 1983, pp. 210–211.
[8] Saliba, Jamil. *Philosophical Dictionary*, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
[9] Lalande, A. *Technical and Critical Vocabulary of Philosophy*, p. 170.
[10]Mohamed Abed; al-Jabri, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Rational Sciences and the Development of Scientific Thought*, 5th ed., Center for Arab Unity Studies, Lebanon, 2002, p. 15.

subject through its engagement with the object and simultaneously creates the object through the action of the subject upon it."[11]

2. The Concept of the Epistemological Obstacle:

One of the most important concepts in Gaston Bachelard's*The History of Science* is the notion of the epistemological obstacle. This concept refers to all forms of hindrance or stagnation that may occur in the development of the history of science.[12]Bachelard defines it as the factors that prevent scientific thought from progressing or delay scientific activity. He argues that these obstacles are linked to the psychological conditions[13] of knowledge itself, rather than external factors. In other words, the epistemological obstacle is connected to the knowing subject and their relationship with the object. Its direct cause lies in subjective preconceptions, often operating unconsciously. These obstacles also have historical characteristics, as they are continuously renewed. On the other hand, Bachelard asserts that scientific development cannot be discussed without considering obstacles, since they may also play a positive role in shaping knowledge.

3. The Concept of the Epistemological Break:

This concept, introduced by Bachelard, describes the manner in which ruptures occur in the history of science, and the forms of revolution that may emerge in this history. Such breaks occur when certain scientific theories are established upon the ruins of previous, outdated ones.[14]

This is a perspective based on *rupture*, which holds that scientific knowledge does not rely on the same meanings carried by concepts at a particular stage of science. Rather, science undergoes a process of reconstructing its concepts, developments, and theories through their continual revision and redefinition, in order to generate new meanings. As Abed al-Jabri states:

"The history of science is not a static history; rather, it is a dynamic history characterized by qualitative features that require the history of science to continuously construct its subject."[15]

4. The Concept of the Scientific Method:

The scientific method is considered one of the fundamental topics in conducting studies, preparing research, and applying their results. Research methods vary according to the diversity of studies and their respective fields, as the method constitutes the proper foundation for obtaining accurate information and data, and for reaching reliable conclusions.[16]

In the *Philosophical Dictionary*, the method is succinctly defined as:

"The method, in general, is a specific means to achieve a particular end."

The scientific method, specifically, is an organized plan of mental or sensory operations aimed at uncovering or demonstrating a truth.[17]

5. The Concept of Rationality:

In the *Philosophical Dictionary*, Madkour (01) identifies three meanings of rationality:

1. **First meaning:** It refers to the authority of reason, which explains things by referring them to intelligible causes.

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[11]Mohamed Abed; al-Jabri,*Op. cit.*, p. 48.

[12]Azzam, Muhammad. *Introduction to the Philosophy of Science: Studies in Contemporary Epistemology*. Dar Tlass Publishing, Damascus, 1993, p. 79.

[13]QasimHashem, Rafid. *Epistemology of Knowledge in Gaston Bachelard.* Babel Center for Studies, University of Babel, 1st ed., 2013, p. […].

[14]Azzam, Muhammad. *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

[15]Mohamed Abed; al-Jabri,*Introduction to the Philosophy of Science: Contemporary Rationality and the Development of Scientific Thought*. 5th ed., Center for Arab Unity Studies, Lebanon, 2002, p. 46.

[16]Abdullah, Ahmed, Al-Lahlah, Mustafa Mahmoud Abu Bakr.*Scientific Research: Its Definition, Steps, Methods, and Statistical Concepts*. Al-Dar Al-Jami'iyya, Alexandria, 2002, p. 42.

[17]Madkour, Ibrahim. *Foreword*, in *Philosophical Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

2. **Second meaning:** It is embodied in the rationalist doctrine, a theory that interprets knowledge in light of primary and necessary principles of reason, asserting that there is no access to knowledge without them, since the senses can only provide vague and temporary information.
3. **Third meaning:** Reason alone is the path to belief, rejecting transmitted truths (*al-ḥaqiqa al-naqliyya*) that are not recognized by reason.[18]

In Lalande's dictionary, rationality is seen as a characteristic of what is rational? what pertains to or corresponds with reason? defined in five meanings, three of which are particularly significant:

a. **Metaphysical sense:** Nothing exists that is not rational.
b. **Epistemic sense:** Every certain knowledge derives from principles that are a priori and indubitable, producing necessary outcomes.
c. **Practical sense:** Any choice is impossible without a mind possessing reason, meaning a system of universal foundations and necessary principles that organize cognitive inputs.[19]

6. The Concept of Scientific Orientation:

This refers to an approach that seeks to reduce everything to science and regard it as an absolute and true value. According to this view, nothing is valid except through the scientific method and scientific facts. Its strictest adherents are primarily supporters of the chemical and natural sciences.[20]

7. The Concept of Empiricism:

In Madkour's dictionary, empiricism is defined as a doctrine asserting that sense perception is the sole source of knowledge. According to this view, the mind contains nothing that has not been processed through the senses; the mind is a blank slate, not endowed with innate ideas. While empiricists share certain positions with sensory theorists, they differ in emphasizing the active role of reason. This is evident in the mind's ability to reflect on sensory input, form mental representations, and synthesize ideas from experiential elements rather than from external scientific knowledge.[21]

8. The Concept of the History of Science:

The history of science is a discourse about a discourse, or multiple discourses, that embody significant or decisive results in a given scientific field. These discourses are interrelated and mutually influential over time, thereby acquiring historical meaning and significance through this very interconnection.[22]
However, providing a precise definition of what is called the history of science is challenging, as this concept has been shaped by three types of backgrounds that confer specific meanings and delimitations within their internal frameworks. In particular:

- **Ideological Background:** Rooted in the transformations of European societies starting from the seventeenth century, including the Renaissance and the subsequent changes affecting all cognitive, economic, social, and cultural aspects.
- **Philosophical Background:** Especially during the last century and the early part of this century, where Brachevic views the history of science as a means through which the activity of creative thought, itself a subject of philosophy, is revealed.
- **Epistemological Background:** Gaston Bachelard considers the concept of the history of science as a tool to highlight the epistemological values of contemporary science.[23]

According to Bachelard, the history of science fundamentally presupposes that the historian understands the dominant and active values in contemporary scientific thought, while recognizing that

[18]Abdelkader, Maher Mohammed Ali. *Op. cit.*, pp. 20–21.
[19]Lalande, André. *Lalande's Philosophical Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1272–1273.
[20]Madkour, Ibrahim. *Foreword*, in *Philosophical Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
[21]Madkour, Ibrahim. *Foreword*, in *Philosophical Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
[22] Ward, Abdullah. "The Concept of the History of Science: A Preliminary Approach." *Al-Banna Al-MarrakeshiCenter for Research and Studies*, Article in *History of Science and Islamic Civilization*, Al-Maʿaz. Available at: www.alabnnima, accessed 19:00.
[23] Ward, Abdullah. *Op. cit.* Available at: www.alabnnima, accessed 19:00.

what is considered scientific and current today will eventually become outdated. This underscores that the process of historicizing science is continuous and never-ending.[24]

The concept of the history of science is one of the most prominent in the field of epistemological studies and among the most debated topics among philosophers of science and epistemologists interested in this type of inquiry. A researcher in epistemology cannot dispense with the history of science; it must be studied, analyzed, and critically examined. As Pierre Boudrot states, when the history of science is studied appropriately, it enhances our ability to discover the foundations and orientations of scientific thinking. It constitutes a natural introduction to the philosophy of science. For epistemology, what is most important in the history of science is the evolution of scientific concepts and methods of reasoning, and the emergence of new epistemic theories resulting from them.[25]

9. The Concept of Philosophical Truth:

Philosophical truth refers to something that is fixed and certain, or to any term used according to its intended meaning in language, convention, or law. In philosophical concepts, truth often relies on a fundamental criterion: the criterion of realism. Accordingly, the real is considered that which is perceptible through direct sensory experience or verifiable in reality.

This representation is not entirely incorrect and aligns in part with philosophical views such as empiricism. However, terminologically, it is limited. One observation is that truth is not always realistic or corresponding to external reality. For instance, mathematical truth is a demonstrative truth.

The ambiguity surrounding the common understanding of truth calls for a more precise definition, as provided by the French philosopher André Lalande. He identifies five philosophical connotations of truth: Truth is the property of all that is right, truth is[26] the true proposition, truth is that which has been demonstrated, Truth is the testimony of a witness who speaks of what they have seen or heard, truth is reality itself.[27]

Contemporary Arab Intellectual Approaches:

1. The Critical Approach of Muhammad Abed al-Jabri:

The critical approach in contemporary Arab thought is one of the frameworks that has sought to provide a philosophical understanding and interpretation of the Arab epistemological lesson. This approach draws on a French intellectual reference, which has specific characteristics differing from the Anglo-Saxon tradition adopted by thinkers of the Arab East.

If we trace the application of this contemporary lesson, we find it widely disseminated among those interested in philosophical research in the Maghreb, due to several considerations highlighted by Muhammad Abed al-Jabri, whom we take as a model for this approach. He states:

"French epistemology is more present in what I write, and this is due to several reasons, both subjective and objective. The subjective reasons are that in the Maghreb, we are more connected to French culture than to Anglo-Saxon culture or others. The objective reasons lie in the fact that epistemology in France is more attentive than elsewhere to rational philosophical critique; it is less focused on formalism, and therefore, it seems more suitable to the nature of the subject I am dealing with…"[28]

Muhammad Abed al-Jabri is considered a distinguished representative of the rationalist tendency in contemporary Arab thought. He employed the concept of epistemology in his scientific reading of heritage in order to critique and renew the Arab mind, as a solution to the problem of authenticity and modernity. This was undertaken with the aim of uncovering the epistemological obstacles embedded at

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[24]Mohamed Abed; al-Jabri.*Introduction to the Philosophy of Science: Contemporary Rationality and the Development of Scientific Thought*. 5th ed., Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, Lebanon, 2002, p. 40.

[25]*Op. cit.*, p. 40.

[26]Abdullah, Ahmed, Al-Lahlah, Mustafa Mahmoud Abu Bakr.*Op. cit.*, p. 43.

[27]http://www.wikipedia.org, accessed 18/02/2016, 17:30.

[28]Mohamed Abed; al-Jabri.*We and Heritage: Contemporary Readings in Our Philosophical Heritage*. Dar Al-Tali'a, Beirut, 1980, p. 10.

the core of contemporary Arab knowledge and establishing a comprehensive epistemological break with them.[29]

This is evident in his works *The Formation of the Arab Mind*, *The Structure of the Arab Mind*, and *We and Heritage*. Al-Jabri, and, following him, his students Muhammad Waqidi, Salem Yafout, and AbdessalamBenabdelali, adopt the French definition of epistemology articulated by Lalande in his well-known dictionary, according to which epistemology is synonymous with the philosophy of science.
While Bachelard's reading, as highlighted by Blachère, underscored a primary importance, the second, representing a decisive discovery, was the reading of Marx proposed by Althusser. This reading introduced the most prominent concepts constituting the problematic of empiricism or voluntarism, subjecting them to critique and revision. Such critique and revision culminate in an affirmation of the autonomy of the object of knowledge[30]and its possession of its own criteria of truth and standards of validity inherent within itself. This historical–critical epistemology, as it crystallized in the works of Louis Althusser and his students, most notably Étienne Balibar, constituted a powerful attraction that drew a large number of epistemological studies, if not the majority of them.

Indeed, most of the articles published in the Moroccan journal *Aqlam* emerged from the stimulus generated by this epistemology and the issues it raised, such as the relationship between science and ideology, the concept of practice, alienation, the relationship between science and philosophy, as well as the concept of structure and structuralism as articulated by Claude Lévi-Strauss.[31]
In addition to the issues predominantly marked by ideological and philosophical dimensions in addressing epistemological questions and engaging with them, Muhammad Abed al-Jabri's entry into the epistemological field begins with a precise use of the term *epistemology* itself. He points out that, for the thinker, epistemology constitutes a set of vital problems that must be highlighted and whose implications must be understood, in order to pave the way for a critical epistemological reading of Arab heritage. These issues can be summarized in three observations:

1. **The first observation** articulated by al-Jabri concerns the problem posed by epistemology as a term, namely, its definition, the delimitation of its specific field of inquiry, the clarification of its aims, and the identification of the nature of its relationship with sciences that are adjacent to or overlap with it.
2. **The second observation** lies in the fact that definition and delimitation are issues that belong to the realm of philosophy. It is therefore difficult to isolate these questions from philosophy and treat them as an independent field of research.
3. **The third observation** is that epistemological studies critically examine, among other things, the results of both the natural and the human sciences.

Consequently, philosophical reflections on scientific discoveries are expected to bear the imprint of those sciences themselves.[32]
This perspective reflects the significant development represented by al-Jabri's understanding and the extent to which it was influenced by the "second reading" discovered through Althusser's interpretation of the concept. This reading clarifies that al-Jabri sought to confer an ideological dimension upon the term in a manner consistent with his interest in heritage and the objectives he aimed to achieve. According to al-Jabri, philosophy has always drawn upon the sciences of its own era in order to derive its questions and principles from them. Here, the old–new dichotomy becomes evident, indicating that philosophy, in its entirety, has been shaped by the development of the sciences, and that the nature of scientific studies has been reflected in the nature of philosophical inquiry.

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[29]Naeema, BenSaleh. "Epistemological Discourse in Contemporary Arab Philosophical Thought."*Forum of the Professor Journal*, Issues 05–06, May 2009, University of Algiers.
[30]Yafout, Salem. *Epistemological Inquiry and Its Horizons*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
[31]Yafout, Salem. *Epistemological Inquiry and Its Horizons*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[32]Abdelkader, Omar Mohammed Ali. *Philosophy of Science: An Arab Reading*. 1st ed., Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, Beirut, 1997, p. 50.

This is what led al-Jabri to assert, in his work *Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, which consists of two volumes, that the term *philosophy of science* is vague and fluid, rendering it a concept open to multiple interpretations by those engaged in epistemological thought.
He further emphasized that there exists a guiding vision, whether in exposition, analysis, or critique, a vision that derives its foundations and indicators from contemporary progressive thought, which dedicates science and scientific knowledge to the service of such perspectives. Salem Yafout notes in his writings that "the presence of this guiding vision is what grounds the functional, instrumental, and hypothetical engagement with epistemology in al-Jabri's work; this is manifested in the manner in which he combined his original interest in Islamic philosophy with his engagement in the philosophy of science."[33]

Such an approach facilitates a contemporary reading of heritage, as it provides us with concepts and methodological tools aligned with visions that serve research into heritage.
Through this approach, al-Jabri seeks to achieve two gains within his project. The first consists in defending modernity as a horizon through which the second gain may be realized, namely, excavation and critical inquiry into Arab–Islamic history. In this context, he draws on the concept of epistemological rupture in order to abandon traditionalist readings of heritage, critique the prevailing mechanisms of thought within Western culture, and reconstruct the structure of the Arab mind by grounding it on new foundations and methodologies.

As he states:
"The critique of reason is a fundamental and primary component of every project of renaissance. However, in our modern Arab renaissance, matters have unfolded in this manner, and this is perhaps one of the most important factors behind its persistent stagnation to this day. Can a renaissance be built with a non-renascent mind, a mind that has not undertaken a comprehensive revision of its mechanisms, concepts, representations, and visions."[34]
In our view, it is not possible to fully grasp Muhammad Abed al-Jabri's thought within the confines of these pages. Nevertheless, we have sought to highlight some of its key aspects in order to enter into the core of the distinctive approach and mode of expression through which he addressed the problem of authenticity and modernity, aiming to explore heritage in order to revive it in a renewed form.[35]
What establishes and defines the unity of thought at a given stage is the unity of its problematic. Another defining feature is its historical character, which links cognitive content, comprising problematic concepts, methodology, and a particular intellectual vision, to the ideological content it reflects, shaped by economic, social, and political conditions.[36] This enables the determination that the reading of Islamic philosophy was not merely a reading of Greek philosophy, but rather one marked by originality and renewal, owing to its connection to its historical and ideological heritage. As he states:"…we must search for a meaning for Islamic philosophy…"
The answer to al-Jabri's question is articulated in his book *We and Heritage* in the following form: *How do we liberate ourselves from the authority of heritage over us? How do we exercise our authority over it?* What al-Jabri means by this is a process of deconstructing the fixed relations within the structure of heritage and transforming them into non-structures, into mere transformations. This falls within the conversion of the fixed into the variable, the absolute into the relative, the ahistorical into the historical, and the atemporal into the temporal.
Through this process, one can uncover the latent rationality underlying many matters that present themselves as closed secrets or as a domain of the irrational, supposedly independent of rationality due to the passage of time, a passage that renders heritage severed from its historical temporality and from

[33]Yafout, Salem. *Epistemological Inquiry and Its Horizons*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
[34]Mohamed Abed; al-Jabri,*The Formation of the Arab Mind*, Arab Cultural Center, 4th ed., Beirut, 1991, p. 5.
[35]Mohamed Abed; al-Jabri, *We and Heritage*, Dar Al-Tali'a for Printing and Publishing, 2nd ed., Beirut, 2006, p. 31.
[36]Naeema, BenSaleh. *Epistemological Discourse in Contemporary Arab Philosophical Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

the causes and contexts of its emergence.[37]Therefore, in order to conduct a critical reading of heritage aimed at renewing the contemporary Arab mind, it is necessary to employ contemporary scientific concepts and methodologies derived from Western thought in general, and French thought in particular. This application, however, must respect the specificities of Arab-Islamic culture. This methodology, inspired by approaches adopted by postmodern thinkers in Europe, especially Michel Foucault, is evident in al-Jabri's application of these methods in analyzing the philosophy of IbnRushd (1126–1198), particularly in the context of the tension between the Maghrebian and Mashriqiproblematics as seen in the reading of Al-Farabi.

In al-Jabri's reading of Al-Farabi, one observes an effort to unify thought and society: the unity of thought reflects a reconciliation between religion and philosophy, while the unity of society aims to build social relationships governed by a system that renews the relations between ruler and subjects. This reflects the historical conditions of the Arab world in the fourth century AH, when the Islamic state began to fragment into small principalities and the emergence of ideological systems among various schools of thought and sects became apparent.

The critical perspective employed by al-Jabri in studying heritage seeks to reveal the epistemological foundations through which the Arab mind produced its discursive, empirical, and demonstrative knowledge. The objective is to free the mind from certain inherited frameworks that had become epistemological obstacles hindering the progress of Arab thought, both historically and in contemporary times, thereby contributing to the renewal of Arab culture and addressing the problem of authenticity and modernity.[38]

Al-Jabri did not limit his treatment of Arab cultural history to a purely historical method; rather, he also sought to rewrite it in a rational and critical manner. A rational-critical engagement with our heritage[39] depends on the effective use of these concepts and methodologies. By uncovering manifestations of despotism, conflicts between schools of thought, and the infiltration of political ideologies, one can identify the obstacles that froze this legacy and rendered it a lifeless relic, thereby enabling the foundation of a contemporary modernity.

Al-Jabri's thesis is fundamentally based on the assertion that inherited "truths" are, in fact, false, a conclusion he derives from al-Ghazali's condemnation of the philosophers. This condemnation, however, had little practical effect, as evidenced by the flourishing of philosophy in the Maghreb and Andalusia with thinkers such as IbnBajja (1084–1138 CE), IbnTufayl (1109–1185 CE), and others, as well as the continued creative contributions of Shi'ite scholars.

In addition to the concept of epistemology as a Western-inspired framework, al-Jabri employs contemporary scientific concepts in his reading of heritage, particularly those produced by Arab-Islamic culture, as previously mentioned. These include:

The Discursive Knowledge System: Referred to by al-Jabri as the *religious rationality of the Arabs*, reflected in the sciences of grammar, rhetoric, and jurisprudence. It is founded on a single epistemic system that relies on analogical reasoning, using the absent to interpret the present as a method for producing religious knowledge.

The Mystical Knowledge System: Referred to as *irrational intellect*, encompassing astrology, Sufism, and Shi'ism. This system represents one of the streams of the old heritage, rooted in Hermeticism and Manichaeism.

The Demonstrative Knowledge System: Referred to as *rational intellect*, defined through logic, philosophy, mathematics, and natural sciences. This system is a universal cultural framework, established by the Greeks, based on observation and experimentation.[40]

Deconstructing the epistemological concept, al-Jabri states:

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[37]Mohammed Khalid, Al-Thiyab. "The Epistemological Reading of Heritage by Muhammad Abed al-Jabri." *University of Damascus Journal*, Vols. 03–04, pp. 411–412.

[38]Naeema, BenSaleh. *Epistemological Discourse in Contemporary Arab Philosophical Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

[39]Mohammed Khalid, Al-Thiyab."The Epistemological Reading of Heritage by Muhammad Abed al-Jabri," *op. cit.*, p. 413.

[40]Mohammed Khalid, Al-Thiyab.*Op. cit.*, p. 436.

"...The 'epistemological break' is a Bachelardian concept; Bachelard employed it within the history of science, assigning it a significance delimited by the boundaries of that history. However, I have appropriated this concept and applied it to a different domain, namely, the history of philosophy and heritage (*Turath*). Thus, I have deployed the concept through a new application in a different field. For me, it serves as an **operational concept** that has enabled me to discern phenomena that had previously eluded my observation."[41]

This heritagewhich al-Jabri considers an integral part of our being, is something we have 'externalized' from ourselves, not to cast it away and contemplate its civilizational and structural origins as an anthropologist might, nor its abstract intellectual edifices like a philosopher, but rather to deconstruct and reconstruct it, bringing it back to us in a new form....
A form that renders it contemporaneous with us on the levels of understanding, rationality and intellectual and ideological deployment.[42]The implication is that our heritage is not a burden weighing upon us from which we must unburden ourselves; rather, it is a formidable responsibility that we must be capable of shouldering, so that we may breathe life back into it, allowing it to once again become a global culture, as it was in the past".

Second: The Analytical Approach (ZakiNajib Mahmoud):
As previously noted, the Arab epistemological discourse has been drawn toward two Western schools. While the Maghreb school drew inspiration from the French epistemological tradition and its critical method, the Mashreqschool was influenced by the Anglo-Saxon epistemological tradition and its analytical method. When we discuss the analytical method as a philosophical movement, one that constitutes a primary component of contemporary epistemology due to its link between philosophy and science, it is not entirely a novelty in philosophical thought. Analysis was practiced by ancient philosophies with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as by classical philosophy with Descartes and Francis Bacon.

Thus, the analytical movement represents the school that deploys contemporary logic, pioneered by GottlobFrege and Bertrand Russell at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, to clarify major philosophical issues through the logical analysis of language. Consequently, logic and the philosophy of language became the two primary foundational fields for analytical philosophy[43]. Its primary task was initially linked to the logical analysis of philosophical propositions in general; it subsequently transitioned toward an emphasis on precision and clarity in the terms and expressions used by scientists. Their ultimate ideal is to endow the language of philosophy with the same clarity and precision found in mathematical logic.[44]

"Accordingly, the analytical approach serves as the methodology of Logical Positivism, tracing its intellectual lineage back to Auguste Comte. It represents a movement within scientific philosophy that relies on empirical experience to ensure the precision and logical construction of scientific knowledge. Its objective is to organize knowledge within a system that embodies the 'Unity of Science', thereby eliminating distinctions between various scientific branches. This is based on the premise that an authentic scientific philosophy can only be established through the logical analysis of science. This philosophy has been identified by several names, including Scientific Empiricism, Logical Empiricism, the Unity of Science movement, and Analytical Philosophy.

In this sense, Logical Positivism, or what is termed Neopositivism, represents an epistemological and philosophical turning point that characterized Western thought. This shift was subsequently embraced

[41]**Ibid.**, p. 436.
[42]AmelAlaouchiche et al., *The Question of Modernity and Enlightenment: Between Western and Arab Thought*, Al-Diffaf Publications, Algeria, 1st ed., 2013, pp. 120–121.
[43]Maher Abdel-Qader Mohammed Ali, *Philosophy of Science: An Arabic Reading*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 30.
[44]El-Zaoui Omar, *Western Rationalism and its Applications in Contemporary Arab Thought*, PhD dissertation, 2006-2007, p. 110.

by ZakiNajib Mahmoud as a representative of 20th-century Arab thought. He sought to provide a new conception of philosophy that diverged from all previous paradigms, aiming to affect an epistemological break with the classical philosophical heritage and metaphysics. Consequently, he aimed to construct a new philosophy that rejects the notion that 'philosophy is merely the history of philosophy'[45], prioritizing instead the logical investigation of scientific propositions."

"The priorities in attempting to establish a theory of knowledge center on meaning and its indigenization (*bi'at*) within Arab thought. This represents his attempt to resolve the problematic of Authenticity and Modernity (*al-asalawa al-mu'asara*), stemming from his conviction that injecting the nation with clear ideas is sufficient to catalyze its momentum and achieve a renaissance (*Nahda*). He argues that the current crisis in the realm of ideas is primarily due to their opacity and ambiguity, which prevents them from being translated into specific behaviours and constitutes an epistemological obstacle to Arab thought.
To this end, he offers a solution: we must not stop at the idea in itself, but rather look beyond it to envision the future consequences of its application. In other words, how would people's lives change in the future if we adopted a particular idea? For instance, it is not enough to merely comprehend the connotations and meanings of 'democracy'; we must envision what life would be like in a democratic society and identify its distinguishing characteristics, an attempt to prospectively evaluate the results of an idea before its implementation.

Thus, Logical Positivism is a profound call to embrace science and scientific thinking as the sound and certain path toward progress and resurgence. It stands as one of the most mature endeavours in contemporary Arab philosophical thought... Indeed, Logical Positivism, as a philosophy of knowledge, can contribute to addressing certain intellectual issues and serve as a positive summons toward science, experimentation, clarity, and precision."[46]
"ZakiNajib Mahmoud offers various definitions for the philosophy of science, all of which remain consistent with the methodology of Logical Positivism as a contemporary philosophy. In one such definition, he states: 'If we subject scientific statements to analysis and commentary, the focus of our discourse is not external phenomena, but rather the scientific statements themselves; hence, it is a philosophy of science, not science itself'[47]
However, he maintains that it is insufficient to merely describe the philosophy of science as a discourse or commentary on science. This definition must be further specified: when we say it is a discourse on science, we mean it is that which subjects scientific propositions to logical analysis[48].
This necessitates a distinction between science and the philosophy of science. Science is defined by 'object-statements' (*object-language*) that constitute the structure and content of the scientific theory proposed by the scientist. The philosophy of science, on the other hand, consists of the 'meta-language' and explanatory statements.

The primary task of philosophy, as previously seen with the Positivists, lies in analyzing the subjects and propositions of the sciences, specifically the empirical sciences and mathematics. The reason for this focus is that the subjects of these sciences are the only ones classified as 'exact sciences'[49].
For Logical Positivists, the only acceptable scientific propositions are those that describe the external, sensible world. As Rudolf Carnap remarks: 'The subject of research for the Vienna Circle is science... with a focus on the logical dimension rather than considerations of historical development or the conditions... involving social and psychological aspects'[50]."

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[45] Hassan al-Hariri, *The Positivist Epistemological Heritage: Foundations, Manifestations, and Limits*, MominounWithout Borders Forum (https://www.mominoun.com), Morocco.
[46] AlzawayBeghoura, *Western Rationalism and its Applications in Contemporary Arab Thought*, PhD dissertation, op. cit., p. 198.
[47] ZakiNajib Mahmoud, *Positivist Logic*, Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, Vol. 2, 2nd ed., 1965, Cairo, p. 37.
[48] Dr. Maher Abdel-Qader Mohammed Ali, *Philosophy of Science: An Arabic Reading*, Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 33–34.
[49] Osama Ali Hassan al-Mousa, *Methodological Paradoxes in the Thought of ZakiNajib Mahmoud*, Kuwait University Press, 1st ed., 1998, p. 10.
[50] Osama Ali Hassan al-Mousa, *Methodological Paradoxes in the Thought of ZakiNajib Mahmoud*, op. cit., p. 11.

Thus, it can be argued that ZakiNajib Mahmoud's philosophy of science is predicated on the logical analysis of scientific propositions to determine their structure. This analysis is, in itself, a discourse on science intended for clarification and exposition. Consequently, the philosophy of science becomes a language whose function is an explanation based on the deconstruction of the textual language[51].

The foundations upon which it rests include: the analysis of scientific theory, the unification of the language of science, and the integration of all sciences into a single encompassing scientific philosophy. This entails the rejection of all metaphysical and theological propositions as 'empty verbal chatter,' restricting the task of philosophy to scientifically linking language to empirical experience and formulating reality logically through the analytical method. Furthermore, it involves the analysis of language and the relationships between meanings; for the meaning of a proposition is its method of verification. We find proponents of this school analyzing both the everyday language of society and the language of philosophers to discern meanings and resolve problems. A second form adopts logical analysis as its methodology for treating scientific language, aiming to construct an artificial language that serves as a universal or model language for science[52].

From its inception, analytical philosophy gravitated toward the logical analysis of language. In this regard, Ludwig Wittgenstein states: "The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The result of philosophy is not a number of 'philosophical propositions,' but to make propositions clear. Philosophy should make clear and delimit sharply the thoughts which otherwise are, as it were, opaque and blurred"[53].

These features of Logical Positivism, as a philosophy and a new vision in contemporary epistemology, were embraced and championed by the contemporary Arab thought through one of the giants of Egyptian intellect, Dr.ZakiNajib Mahmoud. In his book *The Story of a Mind (QissatAql)*, he remarks: "I do not think I exaggerate if I claim that from that moment in the spring of 1946 until this hour in 1982, I have remained a proponent of that scientific philosophical stance in everything I have written, both directly and indirectly... directly when explaining the subject, and indirectly when writing on other topics, such as literary criticism.
For the proponents of Logical Positivism, as ZakiNajib Mahmoud asserts, philosophy should have no goal other than the logical analysis of what others say. It allows others to speak of the "truths of the world" they claim to discover, and then it analyzes the words spoken to verify whether what is said is meaningful or meaningless[54].

Third: The Critical-Analytical Approach (Mohamed Thabit al-Fandi):
The critical-analytical approach represents another stance necessitated by the philosophical climate of the 20th-century "New Arab Thought." This approach was established upon the intersection of philosophy and science, and through the histories of both. It was the focal point of the philosopher Mohamed Thabit al-Fandi, who succeeded in his writings on the philosophy of science in integrating rational critique, analytical tendency, and historical perspective. Two primary factors facilitated the emergence of this approach in al-Fandi's thought: first, his historical background and self-awareness; and second, his scientific training in mathematics[55]. These factors influenced his comprehensive grasp of the philosophy of science.

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[51] Maher Abdel-Qader Mohammed Ali, *Philosophy of Science: An Arabic Reading*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 32.
[52]Majid Mohammed Hassan, *Modern Discussion Forum (Al-Hewar al-Mutamaddin)*, Issue 950, 2004.
[53] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *TractatusLogico-Philosophicus*, trans. Azmi Islam, revised by ZakiNajib Mahmoud, Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, Cairo, 1968, pp. 112, 114.
[54]Dr. Maher Abdel-Qader Mohammed Ali, *Philosophy of Science: An Arabic Reading*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 38.
[55]Yafout, Salem, *Contemporary Rationalism between Critique and Truth*, Dar al-Tali'a for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, p. 45.

This is evident in his definition of the term, where he presents a conception based not on a unilateral view, but on a tripartite perspective. For al-Fandi, the significance of this study lies not in searching for a scientific method to emulate or impose, but in analyzing the actually existing scientific structure into its constituent elements and foundations, and subsequently critiquing these foundations[56], discarding those that are irrelevant or meaningless, and then evaluating scientific truth within the broader scope of human knowledge.

Thus, the philosophy of science is predicated on both analysis and critique. According to al-Fandi, thisapproachpossessesthree dimensions:

- **The First Dimension:** Critique represents a methodology adopted by contemporary scientific studies and practiced by scientists themselves to re-examine the foundations and domains of their respective sciences, with the aim of achieving logical rigor[57]. He notes here that the stage of critique in the philosophy of science follows the stage of analysis.
- **The Second Dimension:** The critical-analytical method gains its legitimacy when studied within a historical framework. This framework highlights the progressive stages of science in its quest for truth and solutions to the problem of knowledge accumulation, which has experienced ruptures (*ruptures*) and epistemological obstacles. These are addressed through a dual-track (critical and analytical) method to evaluate these truths[58].
- **The Third Dimension:** Given his profound philosophical sensibility, al-Fandi believed that the philosophy of science required a developed definition. This dimension asserts that the philosophy of science must concern itself with inference in the search for truth through various means, including induction, deduction, the hypothetico-deductive method, the analysis of scientific constants, and the evaluation of theories and laws[59].

This path allowed him to adopt an approach distinct from Logical Positivism and different from relying solely on critique. It enabled him to classify the subjects of the philosophy of science into four essential tasks that no research can ignore.

- **The Fourth Category:** This category encompasses subjects of a philosophical nature, representing the value of philosophical inquiry regarding scientific truths[60].

Conclusion

In light of the intellectual distinction that characterizes contemporary philosophy of science, it has become imperative for Arab thought, with its diverse orientations and interests, to take into account the mechanisms of epistemological theory. It must strive to invest in the advancements achieved within contemporary Western thought by grounding its own civilizational project. This project remains incomplete without understanding the essential conditions for the development of scientific knowledge and identifying the obstacles hindering progress, in order to propel the wheels of science in the Arab world and transition from a consumerist stance to a productive one. Given the paramount importance of epistemology, Arab thought has found itself compelled to integrate the achievements of Western philosophy of science into its ambitious project. Through our study of Al-Jabri, ZakiNajib Mahmoud, and Mohamed Thabit al-Fandi, we find that they drew inspiration from various epistemological fountains, leading us to the following conclusions:

First, the critical approach represented by Mohammed Abed al-Jabri derived its criticality from Bachelardian, Foucauldian, and Althusserian frameworks. Notwithstanding the critiques it faced, it represents a contemporary reading aimed at bestowing rationality upon heritage by re-reading the

[56]Dr. Maher Abdel-Qader Mohammed Ali, *Philosophy of Science: An Arabic Reading*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 38.
[57]Dr. Maher Abdel-Qader Mohammed Ali, op. cit., p. 39.
[58]Dr. Maher Abdel-Qader Mohammed Ali, op. cit., p. 77.
[59]Dr. Maher Abdel-Qader Mohammed Ali, op. cit., p. 77.
[60]Dr. Maher Abdel-Qader Mohammed Ali, op. cit., p. 78.

religious text and Arab thought. This was an attempt to uncover epistemological values that might rejuvenate Arab thought, enabling it to join the ranks of contemporary civilization.

Second, the contribution of Logical Positivism in its Arabic form, championed by ZakiNajib Mahmoud, constitutes a profound call to embrace science and scientific thinking as the sound and certain path toward progress and resurgence. It stands as one of the most mature endeavours in contemporary Arab philosophical thought. He considered Logical Positivism a viable alternative capable of addressing intellectual issues and serving as a positive summons toward experimentation, clarity, and precision.

Third, amidst the philosophical dialectic between these two approaches, Mohamed Thabit al-Fandi drew upon their positive aspects through synthesis and reconciliation. He posited that the study of scientific epistemology seeks to achieve rationality in understanding contemporary scientific knowledge. Thus, he adopted both analysis and critique as the core of the epistemological lesson, combining deconstruction with cognitive construction as essential tools to transcend superficial knowledge and achieve profound scientific insight.

Consequently, based on the aforementioned, we can assert that epistemological thinking in the Arab world must keep pace with scientific development while creatively forging methodological tools comparable to those in Western thought. This would empower the Arab mind to engage in epistemic self-critique and re-establish research methodologies to understand and renew our rich heritage. Only then can we turn the page on backwardness by deconstructing epistemological obstacles within operational and theoretical frameworks, ultimately building an authentic, modern Arab intellectual project capable of facing rapid contemporary challenges while absorbing the gains of global knowledge.

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