

Mohammed Abed al-Jabri and Ibn Khaldun: A Path to Modernity

Massimo Campanini

Inna Allāba lā yughayyiru mā bi-qawmin ḥattā yughayyiru mā bi-anfusihim
[Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in
themselves.]
(Qur'ān 13, *al-ra' d*, 11)

INTRODUCTION

Mohammed Abed al-Jabri studied Ibn Khaldun in the larger framework of his reconstruction and renewal (*tajdīd*) of the *Arab intellect*,¹ in order to modernize the Arab world. He proposed mainly to come back to Ibn Rushd/Averroes,² being a quite original representative of that trend of modernist thinkers who tried to re-found critically and historically Islamic *turāth* (heritage) through a critique of Islamic reason.³ As it is well known, in his *Introduction to a Critique of Arab Reason*,⁴ al-Jabri argued that the future of Arab-Islamic culture must be “Averroistic”, that is rationalistic and democratic. Al-Jabri’s interpretation of Ibn Rushd’s rationalism is put in opposition to Oriental (mainly Avicennian) “obscurantism” with a historically and historiographically highly debatable thesis. It is difficult

M. Campanini (✉)

Department of Letters and Philosophy, University of Trento, Trento, Italy

to agree that Avicenna was “a man of darkness” as al-Jabri reads him. Al-Jabri’s thesis is *ideologically* well oriented, being situated in a broader framework of thought aiming at a confrontation with the greatest past of Islamic thinkers in order to find out a thorough *Islamic way to modernity*.

Apart from the multifarious meanings of “modernity” itself, a number of questions arise. First of all, what is the pivot of Islamic rationality? Is it the political issue just because Islam is an ideology whose outcomes and implications are eminently political? Or are religious, juridical, social or anthropological dimensions more central? The renewal of Arab (Islamic) political intellect⁵ involves the hot and debated issue of the Islamic state. Did the Islamic state ever exist? And what were (and potentially are) its characteristics? The problem is crucial in what I call the *ontology* of modernity,⁶ because it involves the development of Islamic history in relation to the development of Islamic political thought, and because the Islamic state is vindicated today as the main issue of modernity (or even post-modernity) by a large number of Islamist trends. In trying to answer these questions, al-Jabri went beyond Ibn Rushd and dealt assiduously with Ibn Khaldun’s thought. In order to understand precisely al-Jabri’s interpretation, it is necessary first to synthesize Ibn Khaldun’s ideas that are useful for our discourse.

IBN KHALDUN AND THE CONSTITUENT POWER

Ibn Khaldun retains a common concept of Greek philosophical thought, of Plato and Aristotle alike: man is a political animal, and human beings are obliged to live in society. Through cooperation, the needs of a number of people, many times greater than their own number, can be satisfied. Unfortunately, aggressiveness is natural in living beings; humankind lives in a natural state of violence and reciprocal opposition; a restraining authority is needed and he who exercises this function becomes the head of the state, so that when mankind has achieved social organization, and when civilization in the world has thus become a fact, people need someone to exercise a restraining influence and keep them apart. The sovereign must dominate them and have power and authority over them, so that no one of them will be able to attack another.

There are two kinds of human organization, the *badawī* (rural) and the *ḥadawī* (urban). In the *badawī* civilization, the coagulating factor is *‘aṣabiyya* or group feeling. The stronger is *‘aṣabiyya*, the stronger is the

badawi group. Thanks to *‘aṣabiyya*, the *badawi* group subdues its neighbours and realizes the state and becomes *ḥaḍari*. Group feeling is needed also to strengthen the inner ties of a civilized state, making it a powerful and feared structure, able to defend itself and to attack. Unfortunately, in the *ḥaḍari* civilization, strength and *‘aṣabiyya* loosen progressively and, at the end, civilization collapses. The cycle must start again.

In this framework, the last outcome of the social and political mechanism of *‘aṣabiyya* is political authority, for people need rulers who keep them apart. As required by human nature, the ruler must be forceful, one who exercises authority energetically. In this connection, group feeling is absolutely necessary, for aggressive and defensive enterprises can succeed only through the help of group feeling. Also, religion is subdued to the group feeling laws. The natural condition of humans does not need religion, and the state could be settled up without religion. Religion is necessary to rule society better though. The Prophet Muhammad succeeded in making Islam triumphant because he was supported by the strong group feeling of the Meccan Emigrants and the Medinan Helpers (*anṣar*).

The creation of the state through the instauration of royal authority implies that the sovereign supports his authority with the *‘aṣabiyya*. I have just said that the state could be settled up without religion, but religion strengthens the state. Indeed, Ibn Khaldun argues that the best state is the religious, particularly the caliphate which can be considered the model of the Islamic state:

Royal authority implies a form of organization necessary to mankind. It requires superiority and force, which expresses the wrathfulness and animality (of human nature). [...] Therefore, it is necessary to have reference to ordained political norms, which are accepted by the mass and to whose laws it submits. [...] If these norms are ordained by the intelligent and leading personalities and minds of the dynasty, the result will be a political (institution) with an intellectual (rational) basis. If they are ordained by God through a Lawgiver who establishes them as (religious) laws, the result will be a political (institution) with a religious basis, which will be useful for life in both this and the other world. [...] This makes it clear what the caliphate means: (to exercise) natural royal authority means to cause the masses to act as required by purpose and desire. (To exercise) political (royal authority) means to cause the masses to act as required by intellectual (rational) insight into the means of furthering their worldly interests and avoiding anything that is harmful in that respect.

(To exercise) the caliphate means to cause the masses to act as required by religious insight into their interests in the other world as well as in this world.⁷

Natural authority implies constriction and oppression of the sovereign over his subjects. Rational authority aims only to worldly interests. Only authority inspired by religion leads the people to act justly in order to get mundane and ultra-mundane gains. Ibn Khaldun believes that the caliphate—the form of state wherein religion and *‘aṣabiyya* are *perfectly* united—is an institution ordained by God; it is the pattern of the Islamic state. The caliphate, that is the Islamic state, underwent a process of transformation and corruption, however. Started as the ideal state, it transformed in a *mulk*, a patrimonial state grounded on injustice and force. The reconstruction Ibn Khaldun outlined of the caliphate’s evolution is telling in clarifying his thought. There is no better way of paraphrasing Ibn Khaldun; I quote him directly at length:

When the Messenger of God was about to die, he appointed Abū Bakr as his representative to (lead) the prayers, since (prayer) was the most important religious activity. People were thus content to accept him as caliph, that is as the person who causes the great mass to act according to the religious Laws. No mention was made of royal authority, because royal authority was suspected of being worthless, and because at that time it was the prerogative of unbelievers and enemies of Islam. [...] The caliphate then went to ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān and ‘Alī. All these caliphs renounced royal authority and kept apart from its ways. They were strengthened in this attitude by the low standard of living in Islam and the desert outlook of the Arabs.

Ibn Khaldun’s theory is here consistent with the traditional Sunni outlook that considers ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya both worthy persons and right caliphs. Both of them took care of religion and of the Islamic empire. Ibn Khaldun further explains this as follows:

Then came the later Umayyads. As far as their worldly purposes and intentions were concerned, they acted as the nature of royal authority required. They forgot the deliberate planning and the reliance upon the truth that had guided the activities of their predecessors. This caused the people to censure their actions and to accept the Abbasid propaganda in the place of the Umayyads. Thus, the Abbasids took over the government. The probability of the Abbasids was outstanding. They used their royal authority to further, as far as possible, the different aspects and ways of the truth. (The early Abbasids) eventually were succeeded by the descendants of al-Rashid.

Among them there were good and bad men. Later on, when the power passed to their descendants, they gave royal authority and luxury their due. They became enmeshed in worldly affairs of no value and turned their backs on Islam. [...] It has thus become clear how the caliphate was transformed into royal authority. The form of government in the beginning was the caliphate. Everybody had his restraining influence in himself, that is (the restraining influence of) Islam. They preferred (Islam) to their worldly affairs, even if (the neglect of worldly affairs) led to their own destruction. [...] A change became apparent only in the restraining influence that had been Islam, and now came to be group feeling and the sword. That was the situation in the time of Mu'āwīya, Marwān, his son 'Abd al-Malik and the first 'Abbasid caliphs down to al-Rashid and some of his sons. Then, the characteristic traits of the caliphate disappeared, and only its name remained. The form of government came to be royal authority pure and simple. Superiority attained the limits of its nature and was employed for particular (worthless) purposes, such as the use of force and the arbitrary gratification of desires and for world pleasures.⁸

We can deduce from these passages an evolving process that Ibn Khaldun believes necessary and unavoidable. The original caliphate was the just and the best political system: within it, religion was the main source of ethics and behaviour, and the sovereign was careful of the prosperity and welfare of his subjects. Then, patrimonial power took the place of the caliphate and injustice and abuse got the upper hand. The monarch was careful more of his own personal advantage than of the subjects' welfare, and the actual power became more and more remote from the ideal state of the caliphate. Thus, the caliphate is placed in a nostalgic past, the perfect time wherein group feeling and religion were espoused and produced the perfect regime. It is an anti-utopia, a *dis-utopia*, while the utopian state is normally located in the future and is an objective to be constructed anew; the perfect caliphate is located in the past. The problem is that, being located in the past, the caliphate cannot be reconstructed anew; actually, it is impossible to recover it.⁹

Ibn Khaldun has been the critical consciousness of the dying classical Muslim civilization; his thought has been, as it was, the summary of past Muslim experience in state building, intellectual production, social and economic evolution. Ibn Khaldun's reflection appears interesting not only for its content, but also for its methodology. 'Abdallah Laroui's interpretation of Islamic state and of Ibn Khaldun is fully aware of this, and it is perhaps useful to deal briefly with it in order to understand better al-Jabri himself.¹⁰

In Laroui's opinion, the Islamic state is an antinomic concept, a concept contradictory in itself.¹¹ In Islamic history, religion and politics run divided and separated, and, although there was the strong desire to unite them, no coherent theory of the Islamic state was elaborated. Ibn Khaldun's analysis demonstrated this truth, in Laroui's opinion. His extreme realism led Ibn Khaldun to place history at the centre of his *Weltanschauung*, and he was radically pessimistic about his coeval political reality, although he tried to rationalize the political and historical data. In Laroui's view, this intellectual attitude draws our thinker near to Machiavelli.¹² Ibn Khaldun and Machiavelli studied the state through a realistic, pragmatic, anti-utopian method in order to renew the Islamic world and Florence, respectively. They tried to suggest the ways to constitute new political and juridical systems. Therefore, the concept of *constituent power* was central in their thoughts. The constituent power is the energy, the dynamism that changes the *status quo* and builds up a new political and juridical system.¹³ In order to implement a new constituent power, conflict—between classes, between states, between humans—is not only unavoidable, but also necessary.

Ibn Khaldun stresses the role of conflict in the social and historical process of transformation, both at micro and macro levels of reality.¹⁴ At the micro-level, humans are *homo homini lupus*, ready to attack one another, moved by a natural force that leads them to implement their individual interest against other's welfare. Consequently, "Human beings need someone to act as a restraining influence and mediator in every social organization in order to keep its members from fighting with each other".¹⁵

As we have seen, the necessity of a restraining power paves the way to state's construction and realization of royal authority:

Royal authority is an institution that is natural to mankind. We have explained before that human beings cannot live and exist except through social organization and cooperation for the purpose of obtaining their food and other necessities of life. When they are organized, necessity requires that they deal with each other and satisfy their needs. Each one will stretch out his hand for whatever he needs and (try simply to) take it, since injustice and aggressiveness are in the animal nature. The others, in turn, will try to prevent him from taking it, motivated by wrathfulness and spite and the strong human reaction when one's own property is menaced. This causes dissension, which leads to hostilities, and hostilities lead to trouble and bloodshed and loss of life, which lead to the destruction of the species. Now, (the human species) is one of the things the Creator has especially (enjoined us) to preserve. People, thus, cannot persist in a state of anarchy

and without a ruler who keeps them apart. Therefore, they need a person to restrain them. He is their ruler. As is required by human nature, he must be a forceful ruler, one who exercises authority.¹⁶

The need for continuous defence and military protection regards all human activities:

If this is true with regard to the place where one lives, which is in constant need of defence and military protection, it is equally true with regard to every other human activity, such as prophecy, the establishment of royal authority, or propaganda. Nothing can be achieved in these matters without fighting for it, since man has the natural urge to offer resistance. And for fighting one cannot do without group feeling, as we mentioned at the beginning.¹⁷

At the macro-level, Ibn Khaldun's dialectics between the two *'umrans* (civilizations)—*badawi* and *ḥadari*—involves continual strife and an ongoing transformation of political structures. The translation from the *'umran badawi* into the *'umran ḥadari* happens through violence. Violence actualizes the superiority of the *'aṣabiyya* of a group over another. When the energy and dynamism of a social group (its constituent power) weakens due to the weakening of *'aṣabiyya*, the group is prey to other groups' aggressiveness:

A nation that has been defeated and has come under the rule of another nation will quickly perish.

The reason for this may possibly lie in the apathy that comes over people when they lose control of their own affairs and, through enslavement, become the instrument of others and dependent upon them. Hope diminishes and weakens. Now, propagation and increase in civilization (population) take place only as the result of strong hope and of the energy that hope creates in animal powers (of man). When hope and the things it stimulates are gone through apathy, and when group feeling has disappeared under the impact of defeat, civilization decreases and business and other activities stop. With their strength dwindling under the impact of defeat, people become unable to defend themselves. They become the victims of anyone who tries to dominate them, and a prey to anyone who has the appetite. It makes no difference whether they have already reached the limit of their royal authority or not.¹⁸

Conflict and war determinate civilization's evolution. Any winning civilization trains its constituent power to build new institutions. After a

number of generations pass away, the constituent power precipitates into crisis. The constituent power of *‘aṣabiyya* finds out its limits in the state itself it constituted and realized. In Hegelian terms, the state becomes the dialectical negative of *‘aṣabiyya*. For state and civilization corrupt *‘aṣabiyya*; luxury and injustice destroy civilization. After the loosening of the group’s feeling due to the triumph of civilization, the state collapses. *‘Aṣabiyya* creates state and authority, but the corruption of the group feeling weakens authority and finally the state collapses.

In Ibn Khaldun (and in Machiavelli as well), “*dis-utopia*” (*anti-utopia*)—the idea that it is impossible to build a perfect state—obstructs a teleological and finalistic path of human history. Consequently, Ibn Khaldun’s hopes to renew Islam had been defeated by historical reality. The disenchanted and objective analysis of human societies through history he fathomed led to a rationalization of politics, as well as to the keen consciousness that the virtuous city, where justice dominates and the king reigns implementing the divine Law (i.e. the Islamic state) is just a dream. In the past, it was the caliphate,¹⁹ but now the caliphate is over and cannot be built up again.

Although Ibn Khaldun’s solutions are negative, his method is new and productive and can be compared with Antonio Gramsci’s approach. The point is not to describe Ibn Khaldun as a forerunner of Gramsci. But, exactly like Gramsci,²⁰ Ibn Khaldun views politics as a science grounded in philosophy. For politics represents the main hermeneutical key to understand history. History, on the other side, unveils us the “truth” of human affairs and teaches us how to direct political action without mistakes in order to realize the welfare of humankind. As a consequence, history is steadily grounded in philosophy insofar as only philosophy is able to provide history with a sound methodology of inquiry. As Ibn Khaldun puts it in a very important passage:

The inner meaning of history involves speculation and an attempt to get at the truth, subtle explanations of the causes and origins of existing things, and deep knowledge of the how and why of the events. History, therefore, is firmly rooted in philosophy. It deserves to be accounted as a branch of it.²¹

History is a philosophical science insofar as it is a *scientific* discipline, working on sound epistemological premises, grounding its argumentations in reality, resorting to clear reasoning and analysis.²² The scientific character of history can lead the people who study it to re-appropriate

politics and political consciousness. As Gramsci did, Ibn Khaldun studied history with a political aim. If politics is the main hermeneutical key of interpretation of history, to read history through politics can lead Arab and Islamic thought to re-appropriate its heritage by resorting to its own methods and instruments, and this is, at the end, the real modernity of Ibn Khaldun.

AL-JABRI'S POLITICAL PROJECT

The previous analysis was necessary to assess better al-Jabri's position in the debate about politics in/and modernity. Al-Jabri devoted a full book to the analysis of Ibn Khaldun's thought, focusing on the two central concepts of *'aṣabiyya* (group feeling) and *dawla* (state).²³ He argues that *'aṣabiyya* is for Ibn Khaldun the very founding principle of all Arab-Islamic political system. Without *'aṣabiyya*, neither Muhammad's ideal community at Medina nor the caliphate nor in general the state would have existed. As it happened in Laroui, for al-Jabri too, Ibn Khaldun's thought is essential to interpret all Islamic history.

Now, in al-Jabri's opinion, classical Islamic political thought confused surreptitiously the "king of the cosmic city", God, with the "king of the human city", the caliph. Caliphs claimed to be considered "shadows" of God on earth,²⁴ while they were mere substitutes of the Prophet. It is important to stress that al-Jabri does not mean that this claim implies an arbitrary mixture of religion and politics, that is a kind of "theocracy". Rather, he denounces that worldly kings and sovereigns that claimed the sacredness of their power in order to grant its intangibility and irremovability. They exploited religion for their illicit goals.

Three hermeneutical keys must be used to understand Islamic political development: "tribe" (*qabīla*); "booty" (*ghanīma*) and doctrine/belief (*'aqīda*). The first two are heritages of Bedouin and pre-Islamic civilization (the *'umrān badawī* in Ibn Khaldun's terms); on the other hand, doctrine and belief are outcomes of the civilizing influence of Islam (of the *'umrān ḥaḍārī* of "Islamdom," in Ibn Khaldun's terms).

Qabīla is not simply the "tribe", but implies kinship (*qarāba*) in Western anthropology's language, "group feeling" (*'aṣabiyya*) and Bedouin exclusivity and particularity (*'ashā'iriyya*), derived from the strength of Bedouin *'aṣabiyya*. It is about a whole of ties (*ḥatmiyyāt*) that circumscribe and restrict political power within the group, both tribal group and modern societal group. *al-ghanīma*, "booty", according to al-Jabri means "patrimonial state", that is an economic system grounded on tax levy and income

(*al-iqtisād asāsān ‘alā al-kharāj wa al-rī’*). It corresponds to the *mulk* so keenly studied by Ibn Khaldun. ‘*aqīda*, “doctrine” or “belief”, is not only the ideological structure, inspired by religion, upon which Arab political intellect grew, but eminently the grip that religious ideological structure has on creed (*i’tiqād*) and indoctrination (*tamadhdhub*). Easily religious ideological pre-eminence and indoctrination transform themselves into imposition of not shared ideas and principles, that is in authoritarianism.

Muhammad’s time was the time of ‘*aqīda*; Muhammad’s Medinese community was a real political community and can be considered as an “Islamic state”. It was not a “theocratic” state, however. Simply a *politeia* grounded on divine Law but managed by men. The Qur’ānic basis of the *da‘wa muhammadiyya* can be found, according to al-Jabri: in the consultation (*shūrā* verses, 42: 38 (“those who answer their Lord call consult each other in their affairs”), and 3: 159 “And consult them on the matter”). Umayyads’ time was the time of *qabīla*, because they were supporters of Arabism. Moreover, Mu‘āwiya’s *mulk* was a real *political state* (*dawla siyāsiyya*). He ruled in the name of *qabīla*, not of ‘*aqīda*—thus betraying the heritage of the Prophet—and separated in his person the function of prince/emir from the function of religious scholar (*‘ālim*).²⁵ Mu‘āwiya’s *mulk* was institutionalized by his successors, turning ‘*aqīda* into *qabīla*, so that it became an authoritarian government, grounded on constriction (*jabr*), because *qabīla*’s ideology could not be but authoritarian. The *fitna* represented the triumph of tribalism (*qabīla*), and its consequences were lethal: as Abu Zayd and Ghalioun too argued, *fitna* represented the falsification or at least the deformation of Arab-Islamic political consciousness.²⁶ Other elements added and worsened the situation: the predominance of crude reality over ethics, for example; poor link was made between ethical principles and actual organization of the community.

Al-Jabri’s analysis went further underlining that the ill-starred translation of the caliphate in *mulk* was not a historical destiny, but «the outcome of a whole range of causes, of which the most important has been the lacking of a rule (*qānūn*) structuring government; [...] a great constitutional emptiness established after the Prophet’s death (*‘adam wujud qānūn yunazzim al-hukūma ba‘da wafāt al-nabiy*).²⁷ In any case, after the Prophet, there was no official legitimization of power. When al-Mawardi (d. 1058) tried to provide legitimization to the caliphate at least on a theoretical level, this latter was in an advanced disintegration and the harms were irretrievable. On the other hand, al-Jabri seems right in denouncing that

Islamic thought, in the field of politics, knew only the mythology of imamate [caliphate] and the ideology of sultanate. If the Sunnis worked hardly for contesting the former in order to keep alive the *status quo*, later nobody contested the latter, either in the old or in the present forms. The critique of Arab political intellect needs to begin with the critique of mythology and the giving up of *status quo*.²⁸

In other words, precisely referring to the history of Islam and its political thought, the crisis of the ideal caliphate—which bore the corroding critique of thinkers such as al-Ghazali and Ibn Jama‘a (and Ibn Khaldun of course)—was not followed by a complementary and parallel critique of the sultanate, the often oppressive and tyrannical *mulk*, but on the contrary transformed itself in the final and unchangeable (alleged) “Islamic” political system. Authoritarianism, supported by a fatalistic ideology, triumphed along with a wholesome quietism in regard to the political powers *en place*. Nowadays, in al-Jabri’s view, authoritarian or better tyrannical political regimes (the new sultanates) are not contested by citizens or religious establishments for the sake of quietism under the umbrella of an out-of-date political theory.

It is patent that this conception is tantamount to Ibn Khaldun’s analysis of the caliphate and its crisis. As we have seen, Ibn Khaldun recognizes that the ideal Islamic state—the caliphate—was betrayed under the Umayyads and the ‘Abbasids and became merely a *mulk*. His perspective is on the whole deeply pessimistic, however: not only are humans violent and abusing, not only is injustice so prevalent, but the right political system, the caliphate, which could have had the possibility to control violence and implement justice, is definitely over.

Al-Jabri agrees with this and says plainly that “Ibn Khaldun, although as all Muslims, believed that the caliphate, as implemented at the time of the four *rāshidūn*, was the most excellent system of government, did not believe in the possibility either of its survival or of its renewal, because all things by their nature are doomed to vanish, and [the caliphate, by nature was doomed] to change in *mulk*”.²⁹ However, al-Jabri starts from Ibn Khaldun and goes further, because while the latter was pessimistic, in al-Jabri’s opinion, there is the chance to change and improve the present situation. “While for Ibn Khaldun, the past resembles to the future as a drop of water to a drop of water”, al-Jabri thinks that the future is different from the past and must substitute the past by improving it.³⁰ In al-Jabri—like in Gramsci—there is “the pessimism of reason but the optimism of will”.³¹ Struggling for freedom and democracy is possible. It is worth quoting again from *Critique of Arab Reason*:

The cognitive content of Islamic philosophy, as well as of any other philosophy anterior to contemporary philosophy, is mostly a dead matter, unable to revive. The situation is different in regard to the ideological content, suitable for a renaissance to new life, that continues to live in different forms, notwithstanding the passing of time. [...] The cognitive content of any philosophy dies once and for all and for always, because it enters history as a sum of “mistakes.” It dies and collapses without any hope of rebirth, because the mistake doesn’t have history. The situation is different in regard to the ideological content of philosophy: the ideological content is itself ideology and the time of ideology is the “possible future.”³²

Ideology is a powerful instrument in history making. Islamic thought has an eminent ideological character, and it is essentially political. Thus, it is fitted for the making of future Islamic history. Ibn Khaldun’s pessimism is overcome. As al-Jabri says, the future (of the Arab-Islamic world) will be “Averroistic” because there is the will to construct the Arab democratic and socialist city. The last outcome of constituent power is democracy and freedom. Struggle for freedom and democracy is the presupposition of modernity. The re-building and reconstruction of an Islamic *nuzum* [paradigm] is the core of modernity. *Islam as ideology, i.e. global vision of the world (Weltanschauung) that orientates political and social praxis*, sounds very similar to Gramsci’s concept of ideology. In opposition to Marx’s conception of ideology as false consciousness, here Islam as ideology becomes the philosophical basis of action.

NOTES

1. Al-Jabri, *binyat al-‘aql al-‘arabī* (*The Construction of Arab Reason*) (Beirut: markaz dirāsāt al-wahda al-‘arabiyya, 1992a); *takwīn al-‘aql al-‘arabī* (*The Formation of Arab Reason*) (Beirut: markaz dirāsāt al-wahda al-‘arabiyya, 1994). I have already discussed at length al-Jabri’s thought twice: *Il pensiero islamico contemporaneo*, 2nd ed. (2005; Il Mulino: Bologna, 2016), 48–56; *Ideologia e politica nell’Islam* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008a), 81–89 (Al-Jabri 1992a, 1994; Campanini 2008a, 2016).
2. Al-Jabri devoted a lot of work in supervising the republication of the works of the great Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rushd, and wrote a book on his biography and thought: *Ibn Rushd. šīra wa fikr* (*Averroes: Life and Thought*) (Beirut: markaz dirāsāt al-wahda al-‘arabiyya, 2001a) (Al-Jabri 2001a).
3. “Intellect” and “reason” are both translated by Al-Jabri as *‘aql*.
4. I am quoting from the Italian translation: al-Jabri, *La ragione araba* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1996) (Al-Jabri 1996).

5. Al-Jabri, *al-‘aql al-siyyāsi al-‘arabī (Arab Political Reason)* (Beirut: markaz dirāsāt al-waḥda al-‘arabiyya, 1992b). According to Ibrahim Abu Rabi‘, al-Jabri argued that the Islamic message is political by nature and that ‘Alī‘Abd al-Rāziq was wrong in contending that the Prophet and his Companions were not interested in politics: Ibrahim Abu Rabi‘, “Towards a Critical Arab Reason,” in *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (London-Sterling: Pluto Press, 2004), 271 (Al-Jabri 1992b; Abu Rabi‘ 2004).
6. With “ontology” I mean the (re)construction, the (re)building of Muslim being. It implied a strong emphasis on identity. Philosophically, ontology is (some people would say “was”) the science of being, the science of “what exists” (*ens* in Latin, but *ón* in Greek, from Parmenides to Aristotle the fundament of Western metaphysics). Nevertheless, ontology is not only the mere picture of the *datum*, but also the comprehension of its meaning. Ontology is also the setting out of a system of relations, the grasping of being in its historical development. Thus, it retains a highly heuristic and practical function. Applied to the Islamic world and to Islamic political thought, it allows for a fresh understanding (*tajdīd*) of old patterns (*turāth*), as a way of grasping Islamic true reality in its historical development.
7. Ibn Khaldun, *al-muqaddima* (Beirut: dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1993), 132–133. For the English translation, see Franz Rosenthal, *Ibn Khaldun: the Muqaddima: an Introduction to History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) (Ibn Khaldun 1993).
8. Ibn Khaldun, *al-muqaddima*, 136ff.
9. The parabola of the caliphate’s theory is more and more convoluted. Al-Māwardī (d. 1058) theorized the caliphate as a still possible system, superior to the sultanate and legitimizing it; al-Ghazali (d. 1111) theorized a parallelism between caliphate and sultanate, the former representing religion while the latter exercising real power; they are perfectly legitimized in themselves, the former through religious charisma, the latter through force (*shawka*); finally, Ibn Jamā‘a (d. 1333) and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) were perfectly aware that the caliphate was definitely over, while the sultanate was the only viable political system. Ibn Khaldun starts from this negative full stop. See again M. Campanini, *Islam e politica*, cit.
10. In general, Ibrahim Abu Rabi‘ argued that al-Jabri and Laroui showed a very different intellectual orientation, for while ‘Abdallah Laroui substantially dismissed Islamic philosophical and religious tradition, al-Jabri is more understandable in an Islamic intellectual framework, because he did not espouse a wholesale acceptance of European school of thought (see *Towards a Critical Arab Reason*, in Abu Rabi‘, *Contemporary Arab Thought. Studies in post-1967 Arab Intellectual History*, cit., p. 259).

11. Laroui (1987, pp. 32–33).
12. Ibid., pp. 118–119.
13. Antonio Negri, *Il potere costituente: Saggio sulle alternative del moderno* (Roma: Manifestolibri, 2002) (Negri 2002).
14. This is also a very Machiavellian feature, see for example Geuna (2005).
15. Ibn Khaldun, *al-muqaddima*, 1993, p. 110.
16. Ibid., p. 148.
17. Ibid., p. 101.
18. Ibid., p. 116.
19. Campanini, *Islam e politica*, 2015; Campanini “naẓariyyat Ibn Khaldun fil-khilāfa: al-ma’nā al-ghā’iyy li-siyāsa (Ibn Khaldun’s theory of the caliphate: the Finalism of Politics) in *Ibn Khaldun. wa manba’ al-hadatha (Ibn Khaldun and the Sources of Modernity)*, al-majma’ al-tūniṣī lil-‘ulūm wal-adab?, Chartage: bayt al-hikma, 2008b, 374–389 (Campanini 2008b, 2015).
20. Fabio Frosini, *Gramsci e la filosofia* (Roma: Carocci, 2003) (Frosini 2003).
21. Ibn Khaldun, *al-muqaddima*, p. 3.
22. By the way, I agree with Abdessalem Cheddadi’s critique of Muhsin Mahdi’s approach to Ibn Khaldun. Although the criteria used by Ibn Khaldun to prove the scientific character of history are philosophical, it is not possible to argue definitely that he was a philosopher like Aristotle or Ibn Rushd (Cheddadi 2005).
23. *fikr Ibn Khaldun: al-‘aṣabiyya wa-dawla - ma’ālim naẓariyya khalidūniyya fī al-turāth al-islāmī (Group Feeling and the State: Ibn Khaldun’s Theoretical Signposts on Islamic History)* (1970; Beirut: markaz dirāsāt al-waḥda al-‘arabiyya, 2001b) (Al-Jabri 2001b).
24. Martin Hinds and Patricia Crone, *God’s Caliphs: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) (Hinds 1986).
25. Al-Jabri, *al-‘aql al-siyāsī al-‘arabī (Arab Political Reason)* (Beirut: markaz dirāsāt al-waḥda al-‘arabiyya, 1992b), 231–261.
26. Nasr Hamid? Abu Zayd, *Critique du discours religieux* (Arles: Sindbad/Actes Sud, 1999); Ghalioun, Burhan, *Islam et Islamisme: La modernité trahie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997) (Abu Zayd 1999; Ghalioun 1997).
27. Al-Jabri, *Arab Political Reason*, pp. 368–369.
28. Ibid., p. 362.
29. Al-Jabri, *Group Feeling and the State*, p. 201.
30. Al-Jabri, *Préface to La raison politique en Islam: Hier et aujourd’hui* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006), 5 (Al-Jabri 2006).
31. According to Abu Rabi’, al-Jabri’s epistemology emphasized the role of hegemony in Muslim and Arab culture, in the footsteps of Gramsci; Abu Rabi’, “Towards a Critical Arab Reason,” p. 261.
32. Al-Jabri, *La ragione araba*, p. 133.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Massimo Campanini is a Professor of Philosophy, department of Letters and Philosophy, Trento, Italy. He has degree in philosophy (1977) and Arabic (1984). He taught in the Universities of Urbino (1995–2000), Milano (2001–2005) and Napoli l’Orientale (2006–2011) and has been Associate professor of History of the Islamic Countries in the Department of Humanities, University of Trento until 2016. He published 40 monographs and more than 100 scientific articles. Among his recent books: *Introduction to Islamic Philosophy* (Edinburgh University Press 2008); *The Qur’ān: Modern Muslim Interpretations* (Routledge 2011); *Islam e politica* (Mulino 2015); *Philosophical Perspectives on Modern Qur’anic Exegesis* (Equinox Publishing 2016).

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