Tirbyi in the Muslim World, with a Focus on Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The educational systems of Muslim societies, particularly that of Saudi Arabia, have been under scrutiny, especially after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC. The Saudi educational system is mostly based on Islamic precepts. Nonetheless, the United States government and other critics continue to blame the Saudi educational system on many levels, saying that education in Saudi Arabia mostly encourages the students to engage in violent actions labeled as *Jihad*. Consequently, these critics have called upon the Saudi government to change its educational system. However, changing the educational system in Saudi Arabia is not an easy task for Saudis as Americans think, because education is associated with IslamСa way of life for the country's citizens. The American insistence also hinges on the notion that Islamic education and Western education are incompatible. In this paper, I argue that the Arabic term *tirbyi*, which is translated into English as *education*, is compatible with Western educational precepts, despite their cultural differences. I also argue that the Islamic educational paradigm transcends *pedagogy* (the art and science of teaching), *andragogy* (the art and science of helping adults learn), *ergonagy* (the art and science of helping people learn to work), and *heutagogy* (the study of self-determined learning).
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         6. Ergonagy, 7. Heutagogy.

Introduction

Since the start of creation and the existence of humankind on earth, there was a great desire for nations and individuals to search for an ultimate truth or for a wisdom that would discipline their souls, waken their awareness, and strengthen their relationships. For this reason, many civilizations were created and engaged in every aspect of life such as

medicine, architecture, philosophy, and engineering; but, unfortunately, many of them disappeared, and a few of them still exist. The Islamic civilization is one of those that managed to survive the tremendous disasters and the diverse conspiracies that were mounted against it, not by its enemies only, but by some of its own adherents whose arrogance and ignorance were key elements in reflecting the false image of true Islam.

The great essence and teachings of Islam were preserved by its sincere scholars and volunteer soldiers. The true soldiers of Islam were not just those who carried swords or firearms; rather, it was those who carried their pens and books and fought against the arrogance and the ignorance of the human soul. They did so to reach the truth and the wisdom that would guarantee them an everlasting life of satisfaction and tranquility. The great Islamic scholars discovered that the truth and tranquility for which they had been looking emerged from their tolerant religion, Islam. The word Islam itself means "surrender," i.e. to surrender one's deeds to the Divine and allow him to carve out of them a pure soul.

As we all know, there is nothing more resistant to fire than water, and there is nothing more suitable for conflict but peace. Peace has been a great concern for governments, societies and individuals around the world, and many of them are in conflict of searching for peace. The question that has to be answered is: Why are we looking for peace? We are looking for peace because we have realized that wars that started since the creation of humankind on earth resulted in nothing but destruction, poverty, hunger, and fear.

We have realized that because of the lack of peace, genocides against various groups have taken place. We have witnessed the death of millions of innocent people who were exterminated because of their ethnicity, religion or ideology. Yet, instead of engage in rigorous analysis to delineate the schism between certain Western and certain Muslim societies, some short-sighted observers have been quick to blame Islam as the culprit (e.g., Coulson 2004, Fandy 2004).

What these critics of education in the Muslim world fail to point out is that ideological indoctrination of students is not the sole domain of some educators in Muslim societies. For instance, in Western societies, to account for the manner in which students become acculturated to the university discourse community and adopt academia=s values, most contemporary compositionists formulate conflict-centered theories based on the assumption that the academia imposes ideology upon students. These theories of academic acculturation often stem from Marxist or other leftist thought, and generally fit within the framework of Social-Epistemic Rhetoric.

Min-Zhan Lu (1992) explained that composition theorists such as Patricia Bizzell, Elizabeth Flynn, Joseph Harris, Andrea Lunsford, and John Trimbul have characterized the writing classroom as a place of perpetual political and linguistic conflict wherein students are forcefully acculturated with the norms of the academy. Similarly, in "Exterminate Y the BrutesCAnd Other Things That Go Wrong in Student-Centered Teaching" (as cited in Farber 1990), Mary Rose O'Reilly maintained that students will always be in opposition to teachers and that a perpetual atmosphere of conflict will always exist in the classroom.

To combat the way in which writing classes forcefully indoctrinate students, James Berlin (1988) and Eric Miraglia (1997) suggested that writing classes should offer "an explicit critique of economic, political, and social arrangements" (Berlin 1988: 21) so that students have a concrete understanding of the ideological options open to them. Additionally, in *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*, Ira Shor (1980) suggested that writing classes should be structured so that students are able to become "their own agents for social change, their own creators of democratic culture" (1980: 48).

Hurlbert and Blitz (1991) believed that conflict is beneficial and that discord in the classroom, even to the point of "incoherence" and "lack of composure," is an effective act of active resistance to ideological indoctrination (1991: 7). They claimed that when classroom power conventions are seen as unstable and in a continual state of flux, it is easier for students to resist academia's values. Additionally, Joe Marshall Hardin (2001) claimed that resistance to university ideology is often built into the intrinsic structure of the class, based on the backgrounds of the students and teacher. Hardin stated that "the personal and cultural politics of students and teachers from marginalized cultures conflict with and create resistance to the normative forces of the academy" (Hardin 2001: 46).

Compositionists generally fall within two camps regarding the way in which ideology is transferred in the writing classroom. In *Education Still Under Siege*, Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux (1993) claimed that ideology is simply reproduced (and not created) in the "rituals" and "routines" of daily classroom activities (1993: 72). Conversely, Raymond William (1977) contended that language and writing conventions are the primary tools for inculcating ideology and furthering cultural norms. Mediating between these two positions is Antonio Gramsci (as cited in Turner 1990), who argued that ideology is both reproduced and perpetuated in "textual representations, linguistic codes, and institutional practices" (1990: 32).

From my belief that "a pen is mightier than a sword," I devote this paper to the truisms that Islamic education and Western education are compatible and that *tirbyi* transcends the Western postulates of education. In essence, Islam, which is based on the peaceful invocations of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him/PBUH) and the everlasting wisdom of the *Holy Qur'an* and the *Hadith,* cannot be the source for the schism between some Westerners and some Muslims.

Major Concepts Defined

For a better grasp of the similarities and differences between *tirbyi* and *education*, the following definitions are provided.

(a) *Tirbyi* (pronounced *tirbaaya* or *tarbiiya*) is defined by the *Ajeeb Multilingual Dictionary* as follows:
1. giving knowledge to children; developing the skill

2. teaching at school or colleges

(b) *Education* is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* the following ways:
1. the process of nourishing or rearing a child or young person, an animal
2. the process of 'bringing' (young persons); the manner in which a person has been 'brought up'; with reference to social station, kind of manners and habits acquired, calling or employment prepared for, etc.
3. the systematic instruction, schooling or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life; by extension, similar instruction or training obtained in adult age. Also, the whole course of scholastic instruction which a person has received. Often with limiting words denoting the nature or the predominant subject of the instruction or kind of life which it prepares, as *classical, legal, medical, technical, commercial, art education*
4. [From sense 3, influenced by sense 2 and sometimes by the quasi-etymological notion >drawing out=.] Culture or development of powers, formation of character, as contrasted with the mere imparting of knowledge or skill. Often with limiting word, as *intellectual, moral, physical*

(c) *Pedagogy* is defined by Knowles (1970) as the art and science of teaching.

(d) *Andragogy* is also defined by Knowles (1970) as the art and science of helping adults learn.

(e) *Ergonagy* is defined by Tanaka and Evers (1999a, 1999b) as the art and science of helping people learn to work.

(f) *Heutagogy* is defined by Chris Kenyon and Stewart Hase (2001) as the study of self-determined learning.

By examining the preceding definitions, it is evident that the Arabic concept of *tirbyi* and the Western concept of *education* share certain similarities and also have differences. To begin with, both concepts convey the intent to develop the existing innate faculties and intellectual capacity of an individual through teaching, instructing, or schooling. However, *education* includes within its meanings the concept associated with the development of powers and calling. These concepts are not present in *tirbyi*. In essence, *tirbyi* seems to convey intent to mold individuals' characters according to standards established by social institutions. Consequently, *tirbyi* also conveys the intent to impose teaching towards conformity to an external force.

The preceding definitions and discussion provide a basis for addressing two interrelated issues. The first is whether the Arabic term *tirbyi* is compatible with Western educational precepts, despite their cultural differences. The second is whether the Arabic concept of *tirbyi* and the Western concept of *education* can help to promote international peace and

conflict resolution education in the educational systems in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim societies.

Pedagogy, Andragogy, Ergonagy, Heutagogy and *Tirbyi* Distinctions

Political scientists Danny Balfour and Frank Marini (1991:478-485) have done an excellent job in summarizing the fundamental distinction between *pedagogy* and *andragogy*. Some aspects of the discussion in this section draw from their analytical framework.

Over the last four decades, some adult education specialists have adopted the term *andragogy* for the philosophy, principles, and practices that they have found most useful in tackling the special learning needs and characteristics of adult learning. These specialists have made a distinction in the adult education literature between pedagogy (an approach to education allegedly based on assumptions of student-as-child) and andragogy (an approach to education based on assumptions of student-as-adult). In 1985, Joseph Davenport and his colleagues tackled the controversial issues surrounding the concept of andragogy: differing philosophical orientations, classification of andragogy and the general utility or value of the term adult education. They also examined the appropriateness of the focus on teaching and learning and critical differences between andragogy and pedagogy. Indeed, as education specialist Popie Marinou Mohring (1990) has pointed out, the earlier distinction between andragogy and pedagogy is problematic in the sense that the pejorative meaning ascribed to pedagogy undermines its older and well-established meaning which neither focuses exclusively on children nor emphasizes the characteristics ascribed to it in the andragogy literature.

Although problematic, the way the pedagogy concept has been treated in the adult education literature is not without justification. A great deal of evidence exists in education at all levels to support the characterization. It is probably best to treat the terms pedagogy and andragogy as the adult education literature has used them like "pure types" or "ideal types" in the Weberian sense, or "models" as the concept is commonly employed in contemporary social science. This will allow one to view the two concepts as extreme positions on a continuum of approaches to teaching, where no one teacher=s approach is likely to be an unadulterated or complete example of either of the concepts.

The basic difference between pedagogy and andragogy is that between treating learners as passive and dependent individuals and treating them as relatively autonomous and self-directed individuals. Education specialist Malcolm Knowles (1984) has noted that much of what is commonly conceptualized as education and teaching is the outcome of attempts to transmit knowledge and culture to children under conditions of compulsory attendance. Knowles (1970, 1984) and other scholars in the adult education domain (Bright 1989, Brookfield 1986, and Ingalls 1973) saw pedagogy as a method which developed in such a context and to have inappropriately permeated all of education, including adult education. Pedagogy, then, is problematic for educating Muslims not so much because its assumptions

may be oriented towards the learning needs of children as because they are associated with specific educational objectives and settings. Consequently, pedagogy does not provide a comprehensive model for learning about Islamic phenomena either by children or adults. Specifically, pedagogy is aimed at transmitting knowledge to learners who are presumed not to have the means or ability to learn on their own. It is characterized by a relationship of dependency between teacher and learner, where the latter is mostly passive and is taught by, or learns from, the former. Pedagogy assumes that the learner lacks relevant knowledge and experience and generally is incapable of determining the learning or educational agenda. As such, the agenda is to be set by the teacher or educational institution. This educational agenda, according to Brookfield (1986), is based on subjects sequenced in terms of level of difficulty and the skill level of the learner.

Pedagogy is familiar to most of us from at least part of our early school days. It probably can be effective and appropriate, given certain educational goals, participants, settings, and subject matter. Also, it can be applied to both children and adults. However, it cannot address every individual=s learning desires and needs. Most adults, and even some children, cannot only learn various subjects from their teachers but also can take an active role in identifying and effectively pursue their own learning agendas.

The basic assumption of andragogy is that adults have a preference for self-direction in learning. As a learner matures and develops an autonomous sense of self, s/he tends to shun dependency relationships. This andragogical model, as presented by Ingalls (1973), takes into consideration the autonomy of mature adults and their drive to continue the learning process. A corollary to this assumption is that the accumulated experience of learners is a valuable learning resource that should be integrated into the educational process. The learning content of andragogy is determined by the learners in collaboration with their teacher or facilitator because of the autonomy, desire to learn, and experience of the former. This agenda calls for solving problems or pursuing interests in the learner=s immediate environment.

Several implications can be delineated because of the fundamental difference between pedagogy and andragogy. The first of these, following Ingalls (1973) and Knowles (1984), has to do with the power relation between teacher and learner. While andragogy makes less of a distinction between teacher and learner, pedagogy emphasizes a dominant teacher and a dependent and passive learner. The andragogy teacher acts like a facilitator or resource for the learner and also acts as an active learner in the process. In pedagogy, communication is one-way directional: from teacher to learner. Andragogy, on the other hand, encourages integrative learning.

The second implication is that in pedagogy, as Ingalls (1973) noted, the teacher unilaterally decides what is to be learnt and how it is to be learnt in the belief that the learners are incapable of identifying their learning needs. In andragogy, the learners themselves directly and significantly influence the curriculum based on their interests and needs. The role of the teacher in andragogy becomes that of a facilitator to help learners form interest groups and diagnose their learning needs. Andragogy allows learners to

6

manage and direct this collaborative process.

Finally, as Knowles (1984), Ingalls (1973), and Brookfield (1986) maintained, pedagogy treats education more in terms of preparation for the future than as a matter of doing in the present. An implied distinction exists between the world of learning and that of doing. Andragogy assumes that learning is central to what it means to be human. Consequently, very little distinction is made between learning and doing, between education and everyday problem-solving. Andragogy calls for identifying and solving problems in the present. It looks at the present situation and attempts to define and pursue concrete goals.

In sum, the nature and outcome of an educational process will hinge upon the assumptions that educators hold about the abilities and needs of the learners. Pedagogy can sensibly be employed if it is believed that students are dependent and passive and would not learn in the absence of steady direction from the teacher. On the other hand, andragogy can sensibly be used when educators believe that students are basically autonomous, self-directed, and motivated to learn.

As Knowles (1973) reminded us, the assumptions educators hold about learners can become self-fulfilling prophecies. Learners in a pedagogic setting can become passive in the classroom largely because that is how they have been socialized to behave. Adults can become ambivalent about becoming involved in the educational or training experience for fear that they will be treated as though they lack the maturity and experience to contribute to the learning process.

Over the years, many of us have found the andragogical approach to be quite useful in a number of areas. These areas include foreign language teaching, professional performance improvement, art education, ideology, cultural studies, learning opportunities, updates on adult learning theory, international business enterprises, library use skills, faculty learning, theory building, academic writing and reading, and social responsibility (e.g., Bangura 1996, Gent 1997, Holton 2001, Jug and Pöggeler 1996, Lierman 1994, Merriam and Caffarella 1999, Merriam 2001, O'Neill 1992, Pastine and Katz 1989, Robles 1998, Savi evi 1999, Sullivan and Qualley 1994, Wildemeersch et al. 1998).

However, recently, a relatively small number of scholars have been quite critical of the andragogical approach. Kaplan (2002), for instance, has argued that one of the main problems facing andragogy is that its systematic nature is more the result of other theoretical deliberations than those of its own. She noted that until the mid-19th Century, andragogy founded its development mainly on prevailing communal, social, economic, political and cultural conditions in various countries. She added that in the 1950s, andragogy turned increasingly into a science whose goals were directed toward humans and their relationship to the world in which practice is only the result of humans' "spiritual praxis." Thus, she called for andragogy to now deal with the theoretical organization of its theory, historically perceive its achievements thus far, and become connected with other sciences to accelerate its own development while at the same time acquire its own identity and an internal coherence as a science. As it now stands, Kaplan believed that different individuals still have very different understandings of andragogy: (a) some consider

andragogy a pedagogic discipline; (b) others consider andragogy a relatively autonomous science within the framework of the general sciences of teaching and learning; (c) still others consider andragogy a method, skill, theory, or model of adult learning. Consequently, while she conceded that the starting point of andragogy as an independent science of adult education is hardly in dispute, she nevertheless insisted that andragogy's autonomy as a science of adult education must now be considered.

St. Clair (2002) contended that contrary to Knowles' six assumptions to support his claim that andragogy is the art and science of teaching adults, andragogy is not all about learning. For St. Clair, the assumptions demonstrate how the theory lays out a humanist view of learners and their potential for growth, with implications for teaching, social philosophy, and human relationships. As such, he believed that andragogy can be considered an approach to the education and development of adults strongly rooted in the disciplinary needs of adult education in the 1960s, but it provides little insight into learning other than a set of assumptions about learners. In addition, he argued that despite Knowles= claim that the framework could be applied to any adult learning setting, it is essential to recognize that andragogy only addresses certain types of learning at certain times. St. Clair further asserted that andragogy cannot be claimed as a distinguishing feature of adult education as a field, because the approach does not provide a clear delineation between what can be considered education of children and that of adults and adult education and human resource development. Thus, he concluded that in the future, andragogy will maintain its role as a necessary component of the field's shared knowledge, but it is highly unlikely to be perceived as sufficient to explicate or shape the education of adults.

Also, Rachal (2002) argued that the efficacy of andragogy is inconclusive and affected by definitional confusion. He then suggested that analysis of research on andragogy yields the following seven criteria for an operational, consensus-based definition: (1) voluntary participation, (2) adult status, (3) collaborative determined objectives, (4) performance-based assessment, (5) measurement of satisfaction, (6) appropriate adult learning environment, and (7) technical issues.

A few scholars have developed new approaches to augment the pedagogical and andragogical ones. In the first of their two essays, Tanaka and Evers (1999a) baptized the term *ergonagy*, coined from the Greek terms *ergon* (work) and *agogos* (lead), to describe concepts associated with education and training related to preparation for, and performance of, work. Combining the definition of pedagogy as the art and science of teaching and that of andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn, Tanaka and Evers suggested that they both provide a basis for addressing the question of whether ergonagy can be considered a component of education and, thus, provide a clearer and more universally accepted concept of occupational-vocational education and training for better international dialogue, research, and comparative studies.

In their second essay, Tanaka and Evers (1999b) argued that although the Japanese term *kyo-iku* is translated into English as "education," significant differences exist between the

two terms. They believed that ergonagy can help to integrate the Japanese concept of *kyo-iku* and the Western concept of education, because ergonagy supports a continual blending of academic and vocational education for improved work opportunities throughout individuals' lives, whether in one or several careers. They also suggested that because it subsumes andragogy and pedagogy, ergonagy can make international dialogue, research, and studies of *kyo-iku* and education clearer and more defined.

Kenyon and Hase (2001) began by arguing that while education has traditionally been seen as a pedagogic relationship and andragogy has provided many useful approaches for improving educational methodology and has been accepted universally, the latter (i.e. andragogy) still connotes a teacher-learner relationship. They further argued that due to the rapid rate of change in society and the information explosion, educators should now be looking at educational approaches where learners themselves determine what and how learning should occur. Kenyon and Hase offered the concept of *heutagogy*, defined as the study of self-determined learning, as a natural progression from earlier educational methodologies and may well provide the optimal approach to learning in the 21st Century. Heutagogy, they suggested, would (a) allow students to work as troubleshooters, problem solvers, and general consultants in charge of improvements; (b) allow one to recognize the critical importance of learners in all aspects of the learning process; and (c) allow educators to help learners remember how to learn, develop confidence in their perceptions, and learn to question their interpretations of reality within a framework of competence.

Tirbyi transcends *pedagogy*, *andragogy*, *ergonagy* and *heutagogy*. As the art and science of learning and teaching that is undergirded by humanity towards others, *tirbyi* hinges upon the Islamic philosophy and way of life called *tawhid*Bi.e. the overall harmony and patterning of the universe. It expresses the necessity to live in the unity of existence. To explicate *tirbyi*, one must then draw from the following *surahs* (verses) in the *Qur=an* that deal with the essence of acquiring knowledge/education in Islam:

> And pursue not that of which thou hast no knwoledge; for every act of hearing or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning) (*Qur'an* 17:36).

> High above all is Allah the King the Truth! Be not in haste with the Qur=an before its revelation to thee is completed but say "O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge" (*Qur'an* 20:114).

From the preceding *surahs*, it can be deduced that *tirbyi* serves as the spiritual foundation of Muslim societies. It is a unifying vision of world view enshrined in the *Qur'anic* maxims (a) *pursue not without knowledge* and (b) *seek Allah's help to gain knowledge*. These Islamic aphorisms articulate a basic belief that knowledge is only possible through the guidance of Allah. It can be interpreted as both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It both describes the human being as "being-with-Allah" and

prescribes what that should be.

Also, from the preceding *surahs*, at least three major tenets can be delineated for *tirbyi*. The first major tenet rests upon its religiosity. While Western humanism tends to underestimate or even deny the importance of religious beliefs, Islamic humanism is decidedly religious. For the Westerner, the maxim, "pursue not without knowledge," has no obvious religious connotations. S/he will probably think it is nothing more than a general appeal to know about something first before attempting to do it. However, in Islamic tradition, this maxim has a deeply religious meaning.

This religious tenet is congruent with the daily experience of most Muslims. For example, one of the phrases that my non-Muslim students in my Islamic classes find particularly difficult to understand is the phrase *in sha'a 'llah*, which essentially translates "if God wills." I would say, for example, "We will have our exam next week, *in sha'a 'llah*." As some of my non-Muslim students often tell me, it seems strange to them to have the future so consciously dependent upon God. Every now and then, when a catastrophe like a hurricane occurs that kills many peopleвas they would sayв"by an act of God," they then would realize the certain ethnocentricity in their understanding the phrase. Inevitably, *tirbyi* implies a deep respect and regard for religious beliefs and practices.

The second major tenet for *tirbyi* hinges upon its consensus building. Islamic traditional culture has an almost infinite capacity for the pursuit of consensus and reconciliation. Islamic style democracy, for instance, operates in the form of (some times extremely lengthy) discussions. Although there may be a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, every person gets an equal chance to speak up until some kind of an agreement, consensus, or group cohesion is reached. This important aim is expressed by concepts like *ummah* ("the Muslim community" or "global Islamic familyhood").

The desire to agree within the context of *tirbyi* safeguards the rights and opinions of individuals and minorities to enforce group solidarity. In essence, *tirbyi* requires an authentic respect for human/individual rights and related values, and an honest appreciation of differences.

The third major tenet for *tirbyi* rests upon dialogue, with its particularity, individuality and historicality. *Tirbyi* inspires us to expose ourselves to others, to encounter the differences of their humanness in order to inform and enrich our own. For example, as Isa Khalil Sabbagh pointed out, some of the universally acknowledged qualities in a true friend are compassion, altruism and respect. In the Islamic context, even linguistically, the word for friend (*sadeeq*) is derived from the verb (*sadaqa*) which means "to tell the truth." This root automatically connotes honesty, trustworthiness, denial of self, support of a friend when in the right, correcting the friend when in the wrong. This tenet presupposes not only honesty but also courage and wisdom. This is why Muslims say: "Better a wise enemy than a foolish friend." In spirit at least, this aphorism could have inspired a resultant sentiment expressed when a friend proves foolish (1985:48-49).

Thus, *tirbyi* would dictate that, if we were to be human, we need to recognize the genuine otherness of our fellow humans. In other words, we need to acknowledge the

diversity of languages, histories, values and customs, all of which make up a society. This has allowed Muslims all around the world to retain their cultures within Islam. This is reflected in the following *surah*:

> To each among you
> Have We prescribed a Law
> And an Open Way.
> If Allah had so willed,
> He would have made you
> A single People, but (his
> Plan is) to test you in what
> He hath given you; so strive
> As in a race in all virtues.

Another *surrah* that echoes Islam's insistence on the respect for diversity is the following:

> Oh mankind! We created
> You from a single (pair)
> Of a male and a female,
> And made you into
> People (nations) and tribes that,
> You may come to know one another.
> Verily the most honored of you
> In the sight of Allah
> Is (the one who is) the most
> Righteous of you (*Qur'an* 49:13).

Consequently, first, even though classical Islamic civilization was a compound of Arab, Biblical and Hellenic cultures, it cast an even wider net by integrating Persian, Central Asian, as well as Indian and Chinese components within its cultural synthesis. And as Abdul Aziz Said and I have demonstrated in our *The World of Islam: Country-by-Country Profiles* (2004), there is not a country in the world today where Muslims cannot be found.

Tirbyi's respect for the particularity of the other is closely aligned to its respect for *individuality*. But the individuality which *tirbyi* respects is not the Cartesian type. Instead, *tirbyi* directly contradicts the Cartesian conception of individuality in terms of which the individual or self can be conceived without thereby necessarily conceiving the other. The Cartesian individual exists prior to, or separately and independently from, the rest of the community or society. The rest of society is nothing but an added extra to a pre-existent and self-sufficient being. This "modernistic" and "atomistic" conception of individuality underscores both individualism and collectivism. Individualism exaggerates the seemingly solitary aspects of human existence to the detriment of communal aspects. Collectivism

makes the same mistake on a larger scale. For the collectivist, society comprises a bunch of separately existing, solitary (i.e. detached) individuals.

Contrastingly, *tirbyi defines* the individual in terms of his/her relationship with others. Accordingly, individuals only exist *in* their relationships with others; and as these relationships change, so do the characters of the individuals. In this context, the word "individual" signifies a plurality of personalities corresponding to the multiplicity of relationships in which the individual in question stands. Being an individual by definition means "being-with-others." "With-others" is not an additive to a pre-existent and self-sufficient being; instead, both this being (the self) and the others find themselves in a whole wherein they are already related. This is all somewhat boggling for the Cartesian mind, whose conception of individuality must now move from solitary to solidarity, from independence to interdependence, from individuality *vis-à-vis* community to individuality *à la* community.

In the West, individualism often translates into rugged competition. Individual interest is *modus vivendi*, and society or others are regarded as a means to individual ends. This is in stark contrast to the Islamic preference for co-operation. For example, Islam=s Third Pillar, *zakat* or Almsgiving, stipulates that every Muslim whose financial conditions are above a certain specified minimum must pay annually at least 2.5 percent of her/his savings to a deserving, needy person, a new convert to Islam, a traveler, or someone overwhelmed by debts. This fosters in a Muslim the quality of sacrifice and rids her/him of selfishness, greed and vanity. As all wealth is a gift from Allah, one has the duty to help his/her needy sisters and brethren when s/he is able. And forbidding to Muslims are dishonesty, theft, murder, suicide, bribery, forgery, interest and usury, gambling, lottery, consumption of alcohol and pork, backbiting, gossiping, slandering, hoarding, destruction of property, cruelty to animals, adultery, fornication, etc. (Said and Bangura 2004:3, 5).

Indeed, the *tirbyi* conception of individuality may seem contradictory, since it claims that the self or individual is constituted by its relations with others. But if this is the case, then what are the relations between? Can persons and personal relations really be equally primordial? Islamic thought addresses this (apparent) contradiction in the idea of *tawhid*: i.e. an energy power of force which both makes us ourselves and unites us in personal interaction with others. This idea allows us to see the self and others as equiprimordial or as aspects of the same universal field of force. This distinctive Islamic inclination towards collectivism and collective sense of responsibility does not negate individualism. It merely discourages the notion that the individual should take precedence over community.

At the heart of the message of universalistic Islam is a respect for cultural pluralism that is inextricably linked to a recognition of the connectedness of all human beings. Muslims must surrender the illusion of separation for the truth of unity. *Tawhid* is the means of implementing cultural diversity. It is a means of making sense of the diversity in the world around us, as well as finding our place in that world. Gradually, one sees more and more deeply into the great diversity of forms. The human essence is clarified and strengthened. There can be no barriers between the individual and unity. *Tawhid* allows one individual to

approach the other in the spirit of mutual solicitude rather than mutual acrimony (Said 2003).

In precept and in practice, Islam is capable of accommodating a broad range of views, attitudes and interpretations. One Westerner who recognized this inclusive character was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who offered the following exclamation:

How strange that in every special case
One praises one's own way!
If Islam means "surrender into God's will"
It's in Islam that we all live and die (quoted in Schimmel 1992:v).

As Said (2003) stated, *Tawhid*, Unity of God, of Humanity, of the Universe and of Truth itself, declares that the material and the spiritual are in reality one, that one cannot claim to be spiritual if one is unable to make a good thing of this life. Conversely, one cannot truly make a good thing in life unless s/he is able to order her/his spiritual life properly. Said added that *tawhid* is a conception whose reality enters into human life at many levels. Beyond the doctrinal and ideological planes, where the oneness of humanity is stressed, *tawhid* mediates one's personal relation to the absolute and the maintenance of harmony with the universe. It is a kind of ecology of the spirit that reconciles that apparent multiplicity of created things with the unity of existence. It is what the "Greatest Shaykh" (*Shaykh al-Akbar*, the Latin *doctor maximus*) Ibn 'Arabi referred to as "the breath of the Merciful" (*nfas as-Rahman*), the depiction of the manifestation of created multiplicity and its reabsorption into primordial singularity as the Divine Being's drawing a breath. More precisely, God comes to self-knowledge in us.

Consequently, an oppressive communalism constitutes a derailment, an abuse of *tirbyi*. True *tirbyi* incorporates dialogue: i.e. it intertwines both relation and distance. It preserves the other in his/her otherness, in his/her uniqueness, without letting him/her slip into the distance.

The emphasis on the "ongoing-ness" of the contact and interaction with others on which the Islamic subjectivity feeds suggests a final important ingredient of the "mutual exposure" mandated by *tirbyi*: i.e. respecting the *historicality* of the other. This means respecting his/her dynamic nature or process nature. The flexibility of the other is well noted in *tirbyi*. In other words, for the Muslim humanist, life is without absolutes. A *tirbyi* perception of the other is never fixed or rigidly closed; rather, it is adjustable or open-ended. It allows the other to be, to become. It acknowledges the irreducibility of the other: i.e. it never reduces the other to any specific characteristic, conduct or function. This underscores the concept of *tirbyi* which denotes both a state of being and one of becoming. As a process of self-realization *through* others, it simultaneously enriches the self-realization *of* others.

Saudi Arabia: A Case Study

Education has been a primary goal of the Najd (medieval town in Saudi Arabia) since the late 18th Century, when the Wahhabi movement encouraged the spread of Islamic education for all Muslim believers. The purpose of Islamic education was to ensure that the believer would understand God's laws and live his or her life in accordance with them. Historically, there were classes for reading and memorizing the *Qur'an* along with selections from the *Hadith* that were sponsored in towns and villages throughout the Saudi peninsula. The Saudi Government has been making proactive strides to improve the literacy rate in Saudi Arabia via enhancements to its educational system.

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Saudi educational system has been at the forefront of discussions. Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah told President George W. Bush that his government was fully prepared to cooperate with the United States in every way that may help identify and pursue the perpetrators of this criminal act. Unfortunately, 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi Arabian nationals.

Now the United States is calling on the government of Saudi Arabia to ensure its domestic policies, especially education policies, do not foster the very terrorist forces that the Crown Prince has publicly condemned. The United States government blamed Saudi Arabia with regard to its education that on many levels encourages students to engage in violent actions such as *Jihad* which, in Arabic, among many other meanings dealing with struggle to attain inner peace, also means to fight, fighting other groups of people who attempt to harm Islam and Muslims, not to fight innocent non-Muslims, as many Westerns believe. However, changing the educational system or culture in Saudi Arabia is not an easy step for Saudis as many people think, because culture and education in Saudi Arabia are associated with Islam. Nonetheless, education in Saudi Arabia, which is related to Islam, does not support any act of terrorism. In addition, those hijackers or any violent actions are not the representation of Islam or the Saudi educational system.

The Saudi educational system has had the same principles since the creation of Saudi Arabia, and there was no such argument that relates this education with terrorist acts until recently. There have been hundreds of case studies (mostly linked to political issues) written on the educational system in Saudi Arabia. The educational system is one of the main foci for many scholars, since Wahhabsim is the basis of this system. Yet, does Wahhabsim encourage Muslims to violate and kill non-Muslims or bomb non-Muslim countries? To probe this question in depth, this section focuses on a relatively short period of time starting from September 11, 2001 until the recent time.

Since Saudi Arabia and its educational system have been the major issue in most Western countries, especially after September 11, 2001, many scholars have written about this issue. The following paragraphs provide a sample of these scholars' perspectives on how the educational system works in Saudi Arabia and how it is related to the events of September 11, 2001.

Rebert J. Barro, in his article, "The Myth that Poverty Breeds Terrorism" (2002),

suggested that a fundamentalist educational system, not poverty and low education, encourages terrorism. To support his assertion, he noted that 11 of the hijackers came mostly from Saudi Arabia, a country that supposedly has a high per capita income and schooling. Steven Stanlinsky, in his "Education in Saudi Arabia: Teaching Terror" (2002), proposed that Saudi Arabia is the base of terror because of Wahhabism, and that the country=s attempts to spread Islam to the rest of the world leads to more violence.

Anthony H. Cordesman examined the educational issues in Saudi Arabia in his book, *Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty-First Century. The Political, Foreign Policy, Economic, and Energy Dimensions* (2003). The author viewed the Saudi educational system as dominated by Islamic extremists. He also mentioned the effects of extremism in Saudi Arabia and cited Osama bin Laden as an example of a Saudi extremist. In addition, Stephen Schwartz, in his book, *The Two Faces of Islam: Saudi Funamentalism and Its Role in Terrorism* (2003), suggested that where Wahhabism is the official creed, there must be a terrorist state. He blamed Saudi Arabia for terrorism, as long as Wahhabism is the basis of the Saudi educational system. In addition, in *Hatreds Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (2003), Dore Gold supported the argument that the Saudi educational system is part of terrorism. He also suggested that Saudi Arabia is not an ally of the United Sates, and that in fact it is part of the problem not the solution of terrorism.

All of these critics of the Saudi educational system show a perfunctory relationship between the Saudi educational system and the Wahhabsim movement. Consequently, I show in the following discussion in depth the relationship and the effects of the Wahhabist movement on the Saudi educational system.

After the Persian Gulf War in 1991 ended, the Library of Congress put out a cultural study research document called *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study* (to replace the one published in 1984). This document described the political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examined the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors. Included in this study is an analysis of the Saudi educational system. One point the study made is that unlike the United States, Saudi Arabia is in the midst of expanding its formal religious education programs in a technologically modern society. This expansion has created some "economic dislocations" and some degree of "social polarization" between those equipped primarily with a religious education and those prepared to work in the modern economic sector. Another key point the study made is that the opportunities for government employment in religious affairs agencies and the judiciary have been shrinking, as traditional areas of religious authority have given way to new demands of modernization and development within Saudi Arabia.

In the private sector, for example, where most of the employment growth was expected from 1990 to 1995, employment was projected to increase by 213,500, but at the same time the Saudi indigenous labor force was expected to increase by 433,900. Consequently, the growing number of graduates in religious studies--in 1985, 2,733 students in the Islamic University of Medina and more than 8,000 in Muhammad Ibn Saud University in

Riyadh--was a potential source of disaffection from the state and its modernizing agenda (Hayat Al-Sehaba 2001).

The Library of Congress study pointed out that since the 1920s, only a few private institutions offered limited secular education (just for boys). As of 1951, an extensive program of publicly funded secondary schools was initiated. The Ministry of Education, which administered public educational institutions for boys, was set up in 1954. In 1957, King Saud University was established to teach non-religious subject matter. Publicly funded education for girls began in 1960 under the inspiration of then Crown Prince Faisal and his wife, Iffat.

In 1960, 22 percent of boys and two percent of girls were enrolled. It was not until a few years later that public perceptions of the value of education for girls changed radically, and the general population became strongly supportive of the initiative. In 1981, enrollments were 81 percent for boys and 43 percent for girls. In 1989, the number of girls enrolled in the public school system was close to the number of boys: almost 1.2 million girls out of a total of 2.6 million students, or 44 percent. School attendance is not compulsory for boys or girls in Saudi Arabia unlike the United States where school attendance is compulsory (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education 2000:1).

In Saudi Arabia, administratively, two organizations oversee most educational institutions. The Ministry of Education supervises the education of boys, special education programs for the handicapped, adult education, and junior colleges for men. Girls' education is administered by the Directorate General of Girls' Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The directorate generally oversees the general education of girls, kindergartens and nurseries for both boys and girls, and women's literacy programs, as well as colleges of education and junior colleges for girls. The Ministry of Higher Education is the authority for overseeing the kingdom's colleges and universities. It is unlike the educational institutions in the United States that are managed by each state individually (school boards within each county) and the federal government (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education 2002).

In December of 2002, the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) published a study on Saudi Arabia's educational system to highlight the official Saudi position on education policy. The information provided by MEMRI focuses on main principles, organizational structure, translations from textbooks, and statements from senior ranking Saudi officials.

The MEMRI reiterated that education in Saudi Arabia consists of the most "pervasive" themes in Islam. A document published by the Saudi Higher Committee for Educational Policy contained 236 principles that explain how students should promote loyalty to Islam by denouncing any system or theory that conflicts with Islamic law (Al-Zaid 1981). Additionally, the MEMRI study mentioned that the concept of spreading Islam throughout the world (domestically and internationally) is an important focus of the Saudi educational system. The purpose of education is to understand Islam in a proper and complete manner, to implement and spread the Muslims= faith, to provide the students with Islamic values

and teachings. "It is very important to provide the individual with the necessary ideas, consciousness and abilities to preach the message of Islam" (Al-Tawheed 2001:122).

Teaching the History of Islamic Glories in order to educate students in "the spirit of Islamic struggle" is another common theme in the Saudi education system (*The Washington Post* July 11, 2001). Tarikh Al-Dawla made strong inferences to the school textbooks and the ideologies found in them. The Saudi government maintains control of every aspect of educational material: "The government shall be concerned with the control of all books coming into the Kingdom from abroad or going out of the Kingdom to the outside world. No books shall be allowed for use unless they are consistent with Islam, the intellectual trends and educational aims of the Kingdom" (Al-Dawla 1999:29-30). The MEMRI study denounced the offensive excerpts found in the Saudi textbooks against the Jews and Christians who are labeled as infidels.

In March of 2003, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) put together a report on Saudi education focusing on a comprehensive study of books used in Saudi Schools. The major point of the study revolves around the results of a meeting with leaders of the American Jewish Committee and Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal held in New York in September of 2002. During the New York meeting, the Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal acknowledged a problem with only five percent of the Saudi textbooks and took action to only correct those books that were impacted. The purpose of the study was for the American Jewish Committee and the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace to review the Saudi schoolbooks to depict the hatred and animosities toward non-Muslims.

The study presented the official Saudi world-view to which school students between the ages of six and 16 are exposed through the medium of subject textbooks. There were 93 books for grades 1-10 (from years 1999-2002) that were examined. Special emphasis was placed on the Saudi Arabian attitude toward the "other," namely, Christians, Jews and the West, as well as on the Middle East conflict, the concept of government, women's status in society and children's status in the family. The criteria for analyzing the textbooks were as follows:

UNESCO relevant criteria:
1. Are the data given accurate and complete?
2. Are illustrations, maps and graphs up-to-date and accurate?
3. Are the achievements of others recognized?
4. Are equal standards applied?
5. Are political disputes presented objectively and honestly?
6. Is wording likely to create prejudice, misapprehension and conflict avoided?
7. Are ideals of freedom, dignity and fraternity being advocated?
8. Is the need for international cooperation, for the formation of common human ideals and the advancement of the cause of peace, as well as for the enforcement of the law, emphasized?

CMIP criteria of analysis:
1. The image of other peoples, religions and communities: Are they recognized, accepted as equal and respected; or are they presented in a stereotyped and prejudiced way?
2. Peace and the peace process: Does education foster peace? Does it support the peace process? Is there any room for improvement in this respect?
3. The AJC study reveals several instances of anti-Jewish and anti-Christian excerpts from various textbooks. Furthermore, quotes from various textbooks also indicate general anti-Western sentiments as well.

However, the West's most dangerous effect on Muslim society is its cultural and intellectual influence in various fields such as the spread of Western practices and habits. These include imbibing Western individualism and alcoholic drinks; Western influences in the fields of literature, art, music, the media and fashion; Western-inspired ideologies such as Nationalism, including its Arab version, Communism and Secularism, Western influence in education and research, such as research of the Muslim world ("Orientalism"), Christian missionary work, Western humanitarian and medical aid, and even Western-invented computer games (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education 2002).

The AJC also made references to textbook quotes pertaining to women and children. For example, women's legal standing and their status vis-à-vis men, including their own husbands in matters of divorce, are elaborately dealt with in the Saudi Arabian textbooks. Specific attention is paid in the books to the various rules that prohibit direct contact between men and women and the importance of women's dress code. The Saudi Arabian textbooks emphasize the child's duties towards his/her parents, of which first and foremost is obedience. Obedience is also demanded from the students to their teacher.

As of 1989, Saudi Arabia had an educational system with more than 14,000 education institutions, including seven universities and eleven teacher-training colleges, in addition to schools for vocational and technical training, special needs, and adult literacy. The system was expanding so rapidly that in 1988-89 alone, 950 new schools were opened to accommodate 400,000 new students. General education consisted of kindergarten, six years of primary school, and three years each of intermediate and secondary (high) school--similar to the United States' structure. All instruction, books, and health services to students were provided free by the government, which allocated nearly 20 percent of its expenditures, or US$36.3 billion, to human resources under the Fourth Development Plan, 1985-90 (Salloom 1995).

The Sixth Development Plan (1995-99) called for greater efforts to improve the quality of general and higher education and vocational training. The Saudi regime has been investing in schools, universities and training facilities to better meet the future needs of the country's increasingly sophisticated economy by offering quality education in advanced fields of specialization (Al-Zaid 1981).

The Saudi Arabian Committee for Higher Education Policy has also been funding a

study-abroad program throughout Asia and the Western world. The purpose of this program is to spread the word of Islam globally. There are more than 1,500 mosques and 202 colleges and almost 2,000 schools for educating Muslim children in non-Islamic countries in Europe, North and South America, Australia, and Asia (Saudi Arabian Information Resource 2002:).

On the other hand, the expansion of the university system in Saudi Arabia has enabled the kingdom to limit financial support for study abroad. However, conservatives fear the negative influences on Saudi youth from studying abroad.

Since the mid- to late-1980s, the number of Saudi students going abroad to study has dropped sharply. In the 1991-92 school year, only 5,000 students were reported studying abroad; there were slightly more than 4,000 the previous year, with half of those studying in the United States. These figures contrasted with the approximately 10,000 students studying abroad in 1984. As in the past, students going abroad to study received substantial financial assistance (Saudi Arabian information Resource 2002:1).

Students selected to receive government funding to study abroad in 1992 received allowances for tuition, lodging, board, and transportation; those intending to study science or technology received an additional stipend (Saudi Arabian Information Resource 2002:1). A male student also is encouraged through financial incentives to marry before leaving Saudi Arabia and to take his wife and children with him. The incentives, including an offer of tuition payment that allowed the wife to pursue a course of study as well, addressed concerns about moral temptations and cultural confusions that might arise from living alone abroad. As an additional buffer against such potential problems, an orientation program in Islamic and foreign cultures was offered at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University for students about to go abroad.

Women going abroad to study were a particular concern for the *ulama* in the Department of Religious Research, Missionary Activities, and Guidance. In 1982, government scholarships for women to study abroad were sharply curtailed. Enforcement of the *mahram* rule, whereby women were not allowed to travel without their closest male relative as a chaperon, discouraged prospective students from studying abroad. In 1990, there were almost three times as many men studying abroad on government scholarships, as there were women, whereas in 1984 more than half were women (Saudi Arabian Information Resource 2001).

In sum, the infrastructure of Saudi education has improved significantly (starting from the 1990s). The Saudi government continues to invest heavily into its education system. Distant education via computer networking and video conferencing are recent explorations and investment of the Saudi Education Ministry. Since September 11, 2001, the Saudis' ability to expand their Islamic curriculum internationally has been severely inhibited. The challenge, at this point, is for the Saudi Kingdom to appease and convince the Western leaders that its education agenda does not support terrorism.

Indeed, Wahhabsim is the base of the Saudi educational system; however, it has improved the educational system, and the literacy rate in Saudi Arabia will continue to

improve. Wahhabsim has not promoted terrorism; those acts are due to other factors such as subjugation by other dominant cultures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as Said (2003) has reminded us, Islamic tradition teaches us that a person must cultivate in the self the character traits of God (*takhalluq bi-akhlaq Allah*). In the daily life of the veritable practitioners of Islam, there is a practical demonstration of how to cherish social and ethical values leading women and men to the good life. Islam offers the stimulus and strength for performing deeds that are distinctly human in the deepest sense: to bring the human being nearer to God and to respect the sanctity of human relationships, which should mirror the attributes of the Divine. In harmony with the world's other great spiritual traditions, Islam offers a model for integrating the impassioned mind and the informed heart which can together call forth the energy to move the planet towards realization.

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