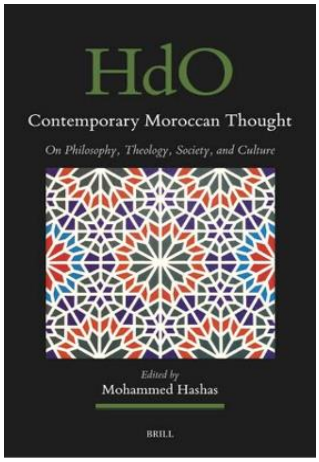


Mohamed Hashas, (ed.).- *Contemporary Moroccan Thought: On Philosophy, Theology, Society, and Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2025), xxxvi, 830p.

Mohamed Hashas's *Contemporary Moroccan Thought: On Philosophy, Theology, Society, and Culture* unearths an intellectual identity that is profoundly anchored in historical context, while also endeavouring to create a trajectory towards the future. It traverses a range of socio-cultural and politically complex situations, converting these challenges into avenues for inspiration and creative thinking. This great project both critiques and integrates the significant scholars and themes present in the domains of philosophy, theology, social sciences, and literary-cultural studies. It is designed to serve as a crucial reference work for academics, offering a foundational point from which to dig into the intricate layers of contemporary Moroccan thought, a thought which is 'as plural as [Morocco's] geography (plains, mountains, seas, and desert), [and which] is conservative and liberal, traditional and modern, clear and ambiguous, systematic and poetic, forward looking and backward looking' (1). As an under-researched area, contemporary Moroccan thought, Hashas confirms, "recognizes its identity and its multiple expressions; it prides itself in its Arabic and Islamic written tradition that dates back to the eighth century AD; it also cherishes its at least three-thousand years of Amazigh oral and inscribed history, a history that is being gradually re-written in the Tifinagh alphabet and language since 2003. Contemporary Moroccan thought also roams the world of plurality, diversity, and infinity, in conversation with universal aspirations and global narratives, as its past scholarly tradition did (3)."

Contemporary Moroccan Thought is prudently organised into three separate sections. The initial section emphasises projects associated with philosophy and philosophical investigation, whereas the subsequent section accentuates theology, political theology, and Sufism. The final section investigates initiatives in the social sciences and cultural studies. Each section begins with thorough examinations of intellectual pursuits spearheaded by prominent individuals in their respective domains and concludes with thematic chapters that tackle specific concepts relevant to the field of study. Notably, Hashas closely follows the chronological evolution of the projects mentioned to organise this volume. For example, within the philosophy section, the progression moves from Mohamed Aziz Lahbabi to Abdellah Laroui, Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, Ali Oumlil, and Abderrahmane Taha. Similarly, the theology section advances from Allal al-Fassi and Mohammed

Hassan al-Ouazzani to Abdessalam Yassine, Farid al-Ansari, Ahmed al-Raissouni, Fatima Mernissi, and Asma Lamrabet. The third section showcases important contributions from various fields within the social sciences and cultural studies. The volume wraps up with an in-depth analysis of contemporary Moroccan philosophical thought, highlighting its key trends, inherent limitations, and its role in global dialogues concerning existence, modernity, and the future epistemological frameworks that should be embraced.

Encapsulating twenty-five years of intellectual engagement, Mohamed Hashas's extensive chapter seeks to address a significant inquiry: How do modern Moroccans conceptualise their thoughts? The chapter offers several insights, divided into six sections, and situates this thought process within what is termed the 'Rabat School' – a geo-cultural designation that is traditional in Arabic academia and is presented here to signify the various intellectual movements that have emerged particularly from Mohammed V University of Rabat since the 1950s and 1960s. Contemporary Moroccan thought, which has emerged since this period, has transformed its geographical periphery into a dynamic and diverse intellectual arena. It has provoked essential inquiries not only within Arab-Islamic scholarship but also in the broader context of modern scholarship. In this chapter, Hashas examines significant themes such as tradition, modernity, space, time, existence, liberty, liberation, freedom, equality, justice, technology, social media, self, other, pluralisation, difference, future prospects, and the global world order.

The introductory section regarding philosophy begins with chapter two, written by Markus Kneer, entitled 'Mohamed Aziz Lahbabi's "Realistic Personalism": The Multidimensionality of the Human Person in a Muslim Context." This chapter opens by clarifying the philosophical interpretations of the individual that surfaced in the twentieth century, while also exploring how Lahbabi supports his claims through two key Islamic texts (the Quran and the Sunna). Kneer asserts that this undertaking results in three important implications: theological, philosophical, and political. In particular, the first implication confirms the ontological freedom of the individual; the second highlights the ethical obligations that stem from this intrinsic freedom; and the third indicates the necessity for freedom of belief and expression, which are vital for conscious accountability and self-liberation.

Nils Riecken, in Chapter Three, explores the work of Abdallah Laroui, a contemporary historian, intellectual, philosopher, and novelist. Riecken deals with Laroui's Marxist historicism (*al-tārīkhāniyya*) and scrutinises his universalist critique of modernity and his critique of the Western inclination to enforce a singular interpretation of history and time, alongside the Arab

viewpoint that frequently perceives time as unchanging and resistant to the evolving nature of modernity. Laroui's dialectical perspective on modernity contests the oversimplified binary distinctions of old versus new and pre-modern versus modern, which are common in Eurocentric-cum-ethnocentric universalist discourses. Laroui promotes a decolonial approach that allows Arab and Moroccan societies to reclaim their histories from this antiquated dichotomous framework, thereby encouraging a more sophisticated comprehension of their position within the historical continuum.

In Chapter Four, 'Mohammed Abed al-Jabri and the Question of Method in Reading the Tradition,' Nayla Abi Nader presents a comprehensive exploration of al-Jabri, one of the most significant and impactful Arab intellectuals and theorists in the modern intellectual landscape, who actively engages with modernity by formulating a methodology for interpreting the tradition (*al-turāth*). Abi Nader articulates al-Jabri's aim to empower Arabs to become stewards of their own tradition, rather than being limited by it. He asserts that true ownership of their historical legacy is essential for Arabs to creatively enrich it in the future. Furthermore, Abi Nader delves into al-Jabri's methodological framework designed to achieve this transformative goal, which includes an emphasis on objectivity, the promotion of an epistemological rupture, and the application of a historical approach that contextualises the tradition to facilitate its transcendence.

Abdessalam Tawil presents another important modernist in chapter five, which is titled 'Ali Oumlil's Reform Agenda: Historical Consciousness, Tradition, and Modernity.' Tawil articulates Oumlil's critique of the inadequacy of reviving classical Arab-Islamic political philosophy to effectively tackle contemporary issues. He observes that even the most revered philosophers, such as Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldūn, who are often regarded as forerunners of modernist ideology, fall short of meeting today's epistemological demands. Pre-modern thought, constrained by *sharīʿa*, lacks the flexibility that modernity offers by liberating itself from this restrictive epistemic framework. Importantly, Tawil emphasises that Oumlil does not advocate for a complete rejection of tradition or an uncritical acceptance of pre-packaged modernity. Rather, Oumlil calls for 'a profound comprehension (*al-istīʿāb*) of the tradition,' adopting a functionalist and historicist perspective, and highlighting the necessity of critique and a deliberate distancing from the past as essential for cultivating a creative modernity. This approach does not suggest 'starting from scratch' (*al-ṣifr al-tārīkhī*), but rather encourages a thoughtful engagement with both tradition and modernity.

Another Moroccan philosopher this volume tackles, in chapter six, is Abderrahmane Taha, a prolific writer whose philosophical writings

exemplify a remarkably cohesive framework of ideas that encompasses the notions of ethics (or 'trusteeship'), translation, tradition, modernity, and secularism. Salah Basalamah examines Taha's perspectives on the essential sources of tradition as a means to foster a more genuine type of modernity (*hadātha*), which he refers to as 'spiritual modernity.' Basalamah portrays Taha as an essential decolonial thinker who expresses an ethical Islamic modernity, positioning it not only as a substitute for the dominant Western modernity but also as a crucial panacea for the global crises it has created for humanity. Taha aims to convey the spirit of modernity – devoid of its dominant Western portrayal – into a comprehensive Muslim interpretation that adheres to fundamental Islamic values (ethics) while also presenting itself as a more viable solution to the contemporary global issues we face as he shows in his book *Rūḥ al-ḥadātha.*

In addition to exploring the themes of tradition and modernity, Khalid Lyamlahy explores the linguistic dimensions of Abdelkébir Khatibi in chapter seven, titled 'Abdelkébir Khatibi: Epistemic Translation as a Mode of Nomadic Thinking.' Lyamlahy highlights a different yet equally significant aspect of this 'nomadic' intellectual. He posits that Khatibi's existence is intricately intertwined with language, a medium that encapsulates Morocco and the Maghrib as both a cultural reservoir and a horizon. Furthermore, Lyamlahy underscores Khatibi's engagement with French philosophical thought, which serves as a foundational element for decolonial discourse.

As a Moroccan critical thinker, Abdessalam Benabdelali endorses ideas which closely align with those of Khatibi, despite their distinct backgrounds and stylistic differences. Written by Juan A. Macías-Amoretti, chapter eight, entitled 'Abdessalam Benabdelali's Critical Thought: Towards a Philosophical Canon in Morocco,' examines the philosophical contributions of Benabdelali. Macías-Amoretti's comprehensive analysis of Benabdelali's vast oeuvre establishes him as a significant modernist philosopher in Morocco. The author elucidates how Benabdelali challenges dominant interpretations of contemporary Moroccan philosophical discourse, investigating its ties to classical Arab-Islamic thought while also critiquing modern Western philosophy. In conclusion, Benabdelali advocates for modernity as a universal framework for Moroccan intellectual engagement, while simultaneously acknowledging that this modernity is continually open to deconstruction and reinterpretation.

Chapters nine and ten explore various themes and significant personalities within both historical and contemporary Arab-Islamic philosophy. While Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldūn are not the sole impactful figures among Moroccan intellectuals and scholars, their status as Maghribi-Andalusian thinkers residing in Marrakech and Fès during the twelfth and

thirteenth centuries has ensured their lasting impact on modern Moroccan academic discourse across multiple disciplines, such as theology, legal theory, philosophy, history, sociology, and literature.

Djelloul Magoura revisits in chapter eleven modern issues through a comparative examination of Abderrahmane Taha and Nassif Nassar within the framework of Arabic philosophy and global intellectual discourse. Taha presents a nuanced synthesis of perspectives, asserting that every nation has the inherent right to define its own modernity, shaped by its unique language, traditions, and ethical principles. He adeptly intertwines the concepts of nationalism (*al-qawmiyya*) and universalism (*al-kawniyya*), highlighting the interplay between local identity and global values in the pursuit of progress. Nassar advocates for a type of philosophical discourse grounded in rational reasoning, philosophical inquiry, and universal principles. He firmly rejects intellectual extremism, promoting instead a commitment to openness and the acknowledgment of fundamental human values – freedom, justice, and human rights. Magoura asserts that both philosophers possess a shared goal, though they employ distinct methodologies: their objective is to witness the prosperity of Arabic philosophy and its attainment of international acclaim. This intellectual dialogue between the Maghrib and Mashriq, as illustrated by these scholars, underscores the diverse perspectives concerning the future trajectory of Arabic philosophy.

Spanning nine chapters (from chapter twelve to chapter twenty-one), the second part of *Contemporary Moroccan Thought* delves into the domains of theology, political theology, and Sufism, highlighting prominent figures who have gained recognition at regional, national, and international levels. The intellectual endeavours explored in this section encompass what is termed 'near thought' and 'far thought.' Certain scholars, such as al-Ouazzani, al-Fassi, al-Ansari, Yassine, and al-Khamlichi, have chosen to concentrate on their Moroccan society. In contrast, others, including al-Fassi (once again), al-Raissouni, Mernissi, and Lamrabet, have engaged in discussions that extend into broader Arab and Muslim contexts. Nonetheless, categorising the influence of particular figures can be complex; while they may be deeply rooted in the Moroccan milieu, their contributions resonate significantly within Arab and Muslim communities. Moreover, several of their works have attracted attention beyond Moroccan and Arab borders, having been translated into various languages across Asia, Europe, and North America – examples include the writings of al-Ansari, Yassine, al-Raissouni, Mernissi, and Lamrabet. The chapters in this section illuminate the factors that contribute to this extensive influence.

The third section of this volume, which encompasses eight chapters ranging from chapter twenty-two to chapter twenty-nine, highlights

significant intellectual endeavours within the realms of social sciences and cultural studies. It focuses on literary and cultural figures whose influences have transcended geographical and linguistic boundaries, thereby embodying universal human aspirations. This integration weaves their ontological and epistemological perspectives into global dialogues concerning tradition, modernity, time, space, writing, difference, the world, and the future of humanity, reflecting the systematic reasoning demonstrated by their contemporary philosophers and theologians.

Hashas's *Contemporary Moroccan Thought: On Philosophy, Theology, Society, and Culture* concludes with a dialogue with Wael Hallaq which begins by exploring the key concepts from his recently published book on the Moroccan philosopher Abderrahmane Taha, entitled *Reforming Modernity: Ethics and the New Human in the Philosophy of Abdurrahman Taha* (2019). In this chapter, Hashas poses several thought-provoking questions that are shaped by Hallaq's assessment of Taha as the preeminent philosopher in the 'world of Islam' over the past two centuries. This evaluation is contrasted with al-Jabri's significant 'critique of Arab reason,' which serves as a cornerstone in contemporary Arab-Islamic scholarship. Throughout their dialogue, Hallaq emphasises the substantial contributions of Arab-Islamic thought to the international intellectual landscape, tackling essential issues such as a comprehensive understanding of the world, social justice, authentic human freedom, and political discourse. He perceives these two philosophers as transcending their geographical and cultural confines, a viewpoint that this collective volume aims to reflect: to highlight notable thinkers and scholars who engage profoundly with their specific contexts while simultaneously enriching global discussions on interconnected matters.

Contemporary Moroccan Thought embodies a remarkable scholarly pursuit that navigates a variety of socio-cultural and politically intricate circumstances, transforming these challenges into wellsprings of inspiration and innovative concepts. This ambitious endeavour not only assesses but also synthesizes the perspectives of prominent scholars and key themes from the fields of philosophy, theology, social sciences, and literary-cultural studies. Hashas's remarkable initiative illuminates the crucial notion that Moroccan tradition (*al-turāth*) and thought are exceptionally rich, intriguing, and, most importantly, significantly under-explored. Indeed, Hashas's project serves as a catalyst for further intellectual pursuits in this area.

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