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Book Review

Muhammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī’s Work, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu (Arap Aklının Eleştirisi 1)*

**Translated by Ibrahim Akbaba, First Edition
(Istanbul: Mana Publications, September 2019), 430
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(İstanbul: Mana Yayınları, Eylül 2019), 430 sayfa

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Book Review

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Abstract

Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī, one of the important representatives of contemporary Islāmic thought, has fearlessly -without hesitation- has stated in his works that the Renaissance of the Arab world and all unhelpful mentalities can only be cleaned with the power of reason, the synthesis and criticism of the old and the new, the examination of tradition and culture, a new method and rationality and construction of the future can only be achieved in this way. According to him, it is essential for humanity to analyze and criticize the understanding of knowledge in the Arabic and Islāmic philosophy and tradition, to remove all unnecessary elements, to identify products and works that serve the needs of the age, and to bring them back to life. For this purpose, Islāmic classical mental traditions -modern Western thought tradition- the rational combination, composition, and synthesis of post colonial Arab thought are indispensable efforts. To present theoretical and practical information about these efforts, stages, arguments, structuralist solution proposals and more... the views of the author, who had discussed in his work titled *The Formation of Arab Reason*, and our evaluations about these views are the main purpose of our study.

Keywords: Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī, The formation of the Arabian mind/mentality, Arab Reason, Islāmic thought, the Culture of Criticism.

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Öz

Çağdaş İslām düşüncesinin önemli temsilcilerinden biri olan Muhammed Ābid Cābirī, Arap Rönesansı'nın ve fayda vermeyen tüm zihniyetlerin ancak akıl gücü, eski ve yeninin sentezi ve eleştirisi, gelenek ve kültürün incelenmesi, yeni bir yöntem ve rasyonaliteyle temizlenebileceğini ve geleceğin inşasının ancak bu şekilde sağlanabileceğini eserlerinde -çekinmeden- korkusuzca ifade etmektedir. Ona göre, Arap ve İslām felsefesindeki ve geleneğindeki bilgi anlayışlarının çözümlenmesi, eleştirilmesi, gereksiz ve faydasız tüm unsurların yok edilmesi, çağın ihtiyacına hizmet eden ürün ve eserlerin tespiti ve bunların yeniden hayata kazandırılması insanlık için elzemdir. Bu uğurda İslām klasik akli gelenekleri-modern Batılı düşünce geleneği-sömürge sonrası Arap düşüncesinin rasyonel birleşimi, karışımı ve sentezi zaruri bir çabadır. Bu çabaya dair teorik ve pratik bilgileri, aşamaları, argümanları, yapısalıcı çözüm önerilerini ve dahasını, tanıtımını yaptığımız *Arap Aklının Oluşumu* isimli eserinde tartışan müellifin görüşlerini ve bu görüşlere dair değerlendirmelerimizi sunmak çalışmamızın temel amacıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Muhammed Ābid Cābirī, Arap Aklının Oluşumu, Arap Akli, İslām Düşüncesi, Eleştiri Kültürü.

On Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī’s Work *Arap Aklının Oluşumu (Arap Aklının Eleştirisi 1)*

The understanding of Islāmic thought, which has a tradition of more than 1400 years, and the comprehension of all the scientific, intellectual, ideal, mental, sociological, epistemological, anthropological, social, political, cultural, psychological, economic and academic groundwork for its past and present have great importance to meet the current knowledge and needs of the contemporary individuals. The determination of the religious

attitudes, forms of state of existence, daily business and functioning, lifestyles that are away from religious attitudes of today's Muslim societies, and the anomalies, errors, and problems that have been caused by all of these are very essential in the solution-oriented research process.

Intellectual efforts to identify the negativities such as troubles, disconnections, and conflicts between Islâm and life -which have a great depression, problems, and delusions- and to find solutions that will make it possible to eliminate them, have been a necessary and important issue for Muslim intellectuals and scholars, especially in the last three centuries. For this reason, the aim of trying to increase the actual values of each society by reviewing its relationship with its principles and values is a necessity and obligation. These necessity and obligation that questioning and reconstructing our cultural heritage are vital and valuable requirements.

Scientific and intellectual activities and studies to confront the realities, principles, current status, failures, and values of Muslim societies had been exhibited by Muslim scholars and intellectuals such as Jamâl al-Dîn Afqânî (1838-1897), Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849-1905), Muḥammad Rashîd Riḍâ (1865-1935), Muḥammad Iqbal (1877-1938) in the middle of the eighteenth century. These efforts and works have been still exhibited by intellectuals today, although their success rates are open to debate. Unfortunately, this issue is still alive and waiting to be resolved.¹ Muḥammad 'Âbid al-Jâbirî (1936-2010) was one of the Muslim intellectuals and scholars who had this effort and labour.

Muḥammad 'Âbid al-Jâbirî was one of the most influential philosophers, scholars, scientists, and high-sensitivity intellectuals who had seemed solutions to problems of the past, the present, and the structure of knowledge, science, academy of the second half of the twentieth century.² He had a lot of works and experiences which try to investigate many academic topics and to illuminate the dark areas and minds, especially his major work comprising the four volumes of *Naqd al-'aql al-'Arabî (The Critique of Arab Reason)*. Al-Jâbirî had played a significant role in shaping the 1980s and 1990s debate on *aşâla* (authenticity), *mu'âşara* (contemporaneity), and *hadâtha* (modernity) by demanding an epistemological break with unscientific thought systems and pleading for rationality, realism, development, intellectual improvement, and the separation of religion and science and seeking for scientific and ethical reassurance.³

The approach of al-Jâbirî, who had devoted his intellectual efforts and academic career to perceiving the causes of intellectual and social depressions and troubles of the Islâmîc world, should be read again with a modern eye. Al-Jâbirî examined issues of the extent of the share and role of tradition and the traditional-Salafist approach or the possibility of this approach, especially in the presence of crises, vital problems, and depressions. Trying to understand the way of reading the Islâmîc tradition with these thoughts, arguments, determinations, proposals, and suggestions is undoubtedly very valuable, necessary, and sufficient in terms of finding solutions to existing problems. In this respect, when his works have been examined and his efforts have been analyzed objectively, it could be said that al-Jâbirî has an international reputation for his sociological, political, and cultural evaluations as a result of his research on Islâmîc thought, the Islâmîc culture, and the Arabian mentality. He

¹ Mehmet Güneş, *M. A. Câbirî'nin Arap Aklını Tenkidi ve Arap-İslâm Geleneğini Okuma Biçimi* (Van: Yüzüncü Yıl University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2006), 1-4.

² Ayşe Uzun, *Muhammed Âbid El-Câbirî'nin Tefsiri ve Yorum Yöntemi* (Samsun: Ondokuz Mayıs University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2013), 11-19.

³ Mehmet Ulukütük, *Muhammed Âbid El-Câbirî'de Din-Akal İlişkisinin Epistemolojik Analizi* (Erzurum: Atatürk University, Institute of Social Sciences, Doctoral Dissertation, 2013), 25-32. İbrahim Keskin, *Bir Yapısalcı Olarak Muhammed Âbid Câbirî'de Din-Kültür İlişkisi* (Bursa: Uludağ University, Institute of Social Sciences, Doctoral Dissertation, 2009), 1-7. İbrahim Keskin, "Arap/İslâm Kültürünün Yapısalcı Analizinin İmkânı: Muhammed Âbid el-Câbirî Örneği", *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 19/1 (2010), 255-274.

had a different position from other writers with his mental analysis, comments, criticisms, and recommendations.

One of the works of Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī, which has a high scientific and intellectual level, is the work called *Arap Aklının Oluşumu* (*The Formation of Arab Reason: Text, Tradition, and the Construction of Modernity in the Arab World (Contemporary Arab Scholarship in the Social Sciences)*)⁴ and this work is the subject of our study. The original name of this book is *Taqwīn al-‘aql al-‘Arabī*. This work has consisted of two main parts and a conclusion with the theme of “*Arap Kültüründe İlim ve Siyaset* (Science and Politics in the Arab Culture)”, following the presentation part that has explained the purpose of the author, which is the introduction of the work. Twelve chapters have taken a place in this work in total; three main chapters in the first part and nine chapters in the second part.

The first part has consisted of the following three chapters based on this major title as “*Hangi Anlamda “Arap Aklı”?* (Arab Reason... In What Meaning?)”:

- ✚ “*İlk Yaklaşımlar* (Preliminary Approaches)”⁵
- ✚ “*Bir Akıl ve Bir Kültür* (Reason and Culture)”⁶
- ✚ “*Arap Kültür Zamanı ve İlerleme Sorunu* (Arab Cultural Time and the Problematic of Development)”⁷
- ✚ “*Tedvin Asrı: Arap Düşüncesinin Referans Çerçevesi* (The Era of Codification: The Authoritative Referential Framework of Arab Thought)”⁸

The meaning frames of the key concepts defined and even developed by the author have been included in this section, where the main lines of the subject have been drawn and the basic features of the point of view have been taken as a basis have been determined. In this way, the author’s concept map on the subject and the cultural reference that he had drawn have been also explained in this section. The author has explained the differences in the meanings of the concepts of mind and idea, the epistemological and cultural meaning codes, the relationship between the object and the subject, and the breaking points in a historical process, by specifying his usage preferences and his savings in determining the concept in the title of the work. He has stated that the normative approach to things is dominant in the Arab mentality by stating that the use of the Western and Eastern languages differs in terms of basic qualities such as “mind, conscience, idea, thought, comprehension, reasoning, exemplary and lesson”.⁹ The purpose of the author in creating a definition of the concept is not to produce an empty word in a sense, metaphysical concept or slogan, but to explore the relationship between the Arab culture and people in the process of accessing knowledge and to determine the conceptual and mental activity in this communication style.¹⁰ With this effort, the foundations, limits, needs, successful and unsuccessful aspects, positive and negative features, and tendencies of the entire history of knowledge and science can be revealed and solutions to existing problems can only be included in the process by considering this multidimensional map with a clear and an objective approach.

The second part has consisted of the following nine sections, based on the title of “*Arap Kültüründe Epistemolojik ve İdeolojik “Arap Aklı”nın Oluşumu* (Epistemological and Ideological Formation of the “Arab Mind” in the Arab Culture)”:

- ✚ “*Bedevî: Arap Evreninin Kurucusu* (The Bedouin: The Founder of the Arab Universe)”¹¹

⁴ Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu (Arap Aklının Eleştirisi 1)*, trans. Ibrahim Akbaba (Istanbul: Mana Publications, September 2019), 430 pages.

⁵ al-Jābirī, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 11-13.

⁶ al-Jābirī, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 13-43.

⁷ al-Jābirī, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 43-65.

⁸ al-Jābirī, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 65-87.

⁹ al-Jābirī, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 11-40.

¹⁰ al-Jābirī, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 82.

¹¹ al-Jābirī, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 87-111.

- ✚ “*Aklın (Yasa Koyucunun) Yasalarının Belirlenmesi* (Determining the Laws of Reason (Legislator))”¹²
- ✚ “*Aklın (Yasa Koyucunun) Yasalarının Belirlenmesi* (Determining the Laws of Reason (Legislator))”¹³
- ✚ “*Dinî “Rasyonel ve Akli” İrrasyonel* (Religious “Rational and Intellectual” Irrational)”¹⁴
- ✚ “*Kadîm Mirasla Âtl Akıl* (Resigned Reason with Ancient Heritage)”¹⁵
- ✚ “*Arap-İslâm Kültüründe Âtl Akıl* (Resigned Reason in the Arab-Islâmîc Culture)”¹⁶
- ✚ “*İslâm’da Aklın Lâyık Olduğu Yere Konması* (Placing the Mind Where It Deserves in Islâm)”¹⁷
- ✚ “*Temellerin Krizi ve Krizin Temellendirilmesi* (The Crisis of Fundamentals and the Grounding of the Crisis)”¹⁸
- ✚ “*Yeni Bir Başlangıç... Fakat!* (A New Beginning... However!)”¹⁹

In this section, the dynamics of Islâmîc culture and the information systems forming this culture have been discussed in various aspects. The author, who had progressed the development of this culture step by step, had examined the basics of the subject, the features of the language, the basic relationship between the religion of Islâm and the Arabic character, and other relevant elements in this section. He offered a broad perspective on the past and today’s world by explaining the dimensions between language-thought-culture-life with examples from foreign cultures, sources, and thinkers. The author, who had given wide coverage to the determination of the legislator and the laws, had investigated the connection between politics, culture, and life. He had proposed the concept and naming of “Civilization of Philosophy” for Greek Civilization, “Civilization of Science and Technology” for Contemporary European Civilization, and “Civilization of *Fiqh* (Islâmîc Jurisprudence)” for Islâmîc Civilization.²⁰

The author had summarized Shâfî’î’s views on jurisprudence and all the rules that he had created regarding the jurisprudence and the methodology of the jurisprudence, and he had conveyed his foundations and determinations. In the continuation of the various examples he had given, he had referred to the word (the literal form of the word) and its meaning relationship in the Arabic statement in this way. In addition, he had added and emphasized that our cultural history had needed not only an external reading, but also an internal reading; the relationship between the sciences should have been established correctly; it was obligatory to create a new perspective by revealing the organic unity, union and connection points that had seemed independent from each other, but they were not independent and separate from each other; after all these steps and stages, it would be possible to eliminate the negative, unsuccessful and inconclusive situations towards the Arab-Islâmîc Culture.²¹ The work has ended with the author’s evaluations under the title of “*Arap Kültüründe İlim ve Siyaset* (Science and Politics in the Arab Culture)” as a particular subject in the conclusion part.²²

The author, who had claimed to deal with a subject that should have been talked about a century ago, as he had expressed in his presentation, had attempted to criticize the mind and evaluate the mentality, which was unusual compared to the conditions of the period. While

¹² al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 111-133.

¹³ al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 133-155.

¹⁴ al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 155-187.

¹⁵ al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 187-213.

¹⁶ al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 213-251.

¹⁷ al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 251-291.

¹⁸ al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 291-339.

¹⁹ al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 339-381.

²⁰ al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 111.

²¹ al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 87-383.

²² al-Jâbirî, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 381-405.

expressing that he had not studied this work only for criticism, he had emphasized that his subject was the reason, his concern was to be rational, and his preference was to establish a relationship with intellectual culture rather than folk culture. In this framework, he had aimed to get rid of the dead elements in the mental formation and cultural heritage by looking at the subject and the cause with a critical eye, at least by attempting for this purpose.²³

The author had attempted to examine the subjects from a new perspective as the character of our culture, its main structure, the organic relationship between ideology and epistemology, the Arab-Islāmic culture, the Arab culture, the origins, foundations, stages, other related issues, and reflections of this culture in life by expressing that it was possible to remove the obstacles in front of life only by getting rid of these petrified elements. While he had stated that in the modern Arab Renaissance reason could not be criticized, he had justified the failure in restructuring with this issue. According to him, it could not be possible to rebuild with a mind that had never been shaken off for a new start. The author’s suggestion to prevent failure was to continue the movement of life with a new perspective -with developing visions- on renewed issues by knowing the culture, analyzing the past, benefiting from previous works and experiences, drawing lessons from the past’s mistakes and studying on the future by predicting logically and correctly.

In our opinion, the author, who had made a case for himself to analyze the Arab-Islāmic cultural history with a new eye -without prejudice, free from complexes, and without the aim of partiality- has an original and critical style with the terms “Arab Reason, Arab-Islāmic Reason, Arab Statement”. The reconceptualization and criticism movement initiated by the author can be considered successful despite the intense and repetitive information about the cultural history in his work. The author, who had attempted to explain the progress of development of the Islāmic culture and related sciences from its origins, is extremely attentive in clarifying the relations of these elements with the social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions, elements, circuits, stages, environments and movements of life. He had endeavored to be meticulous in the distinction between ideology and epistemology by evaluating these relations based on religion and culture. Even though he had a disorganized, disconnected, and extensive expression in defining, naming, classifying, and describing the progress of development in his work like Arabic culture’s features in many fields such as social life, politics, education, and administration, it has stood out that he had not deviated from his purpose. His efforts and aims should be rewarded in this respect.

The author had attempted to explain the effect of the contrasts and how social and political turmoils shape religion and culture by trying to encompass all life with the distinctions of official and oppositional history, artificial and organic relationships, real and hoped, opposite and marginal heritage, religion and politics, culture and mentality. Although he had an approach that transcends the dimensions of the work with a great aim, he had made an effort to complete this restarted movement of intellectual initiative on a critical basis with the ongoing studies within the scope of the other works of the series. The extent to which this goal has been successful is open to debate. Forasmuch, the scattered style in the reconceptualization and expression of the current mentality has almost paralleled the situation which is far from unity in the Islāmic world. Despite the disconnection and intensity in the style of expression, the author’s intention and effort to prevent failure should be appreciated, with his comments on the starting point of religion and culture, their relations, and analysis of the past, the period, and the conditions. His approach of explaining the religious, political, cultural, or social mentality that reflects the outdated, meaningless, fake, and shallow way of thinking that is disconnected from life, history, and reality has an intellectual attitude, in addition to other conceptualized words, with the phrase “Arab Mind and Culture” and suggestions for solving problems, while considering the context and

²³ al-Jābirī, *Arap Aklının Oluşumu*, 7-10.

characteristics of the period. In our view, his persistence to describe the relationship of reality-phenomenon-revelation-the products of religions and its reflections of various dimensions and fields of life, inconsistency and tension on the intellectual point and their results in the Islâmic world critically and objectively is a scientifically valuable and courageous attempt.

With the hope of the increase this kind of work which has scientific evaluations, high quality and solution-oriented assessments, instructions connected to reality, mental analysis, and its existence in life with benefit, development, improvement, suggestion, and success at present.

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